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Wednesday 7 December 2016

Mercredi 7 décembre 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 December 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 décembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PATIENTS FIRST ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX PATIENTS

Mr. Hoskins moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant diverses lois dans l'intérêt des soins axés sur les patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll turn the floor over to the minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I get started, I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for his support on this important piece of legislation. I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge the dedicated and hard-working people who make our health care system work every day. From the doctors and nurses to the support staff and the administrators, we're so fortunate to have so many committed people across this province striving to provide the best possible care to Ontario patients. They're doing excellent work; the results speak for themselves. We're seeing shorter wait times—among the shortest in the entire country—for most surgical procedures; we're seeing, in recent years, improved emergency department wait times; and we're seeing more support for people to stay healthy through a greater focus on disease prevention and health promotion.

We also know that there is more work still to be done. Despite all that we've achieved, too often the services we deliver are segmented and disconnected from one another. We know that system coordination could be better and so could the distribution of health services across the province.

While our achievements are making a difference in the lives of many Ontarians, not all of these patients have benefited equally or equitably. Our health care system could do better at delivering the right kind of care to the patients who need it most. That's why our government introduced Bill 41, the Patients First Act. This act would, if passed, serve as a path to improve the patient experience and provide better access to care for Ontarians no matter where they live. It would improve communication

and connections between the various aspects of our health care system in order to create a more seamless patient experience. It would make it easier for patients to find a family doctor or nurse practitioner when they need one, see that person quickly when they're sick and find the care they need closer to home. It would make it easier for doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other primary care providers to connect their patients to the health care that they need.

One of the key things this proposed legislation would do is enhance local planning so that health care providers are available to patients where and when they're needed and that they can provide care that's culturally and linguistically appropriate and sensitive to their patients' needs and their circumstances. Now, few organizations are better equipped to address the need for greater planning in the community than our local health integration networks, or LHINs. In their current form, LHINs are already responsible for our hospitals, our long-term-care homes, our community services, and our mental health and addictions services. But we still need to address the other services like primary care, home and community care, and public health, which are not connected enough with each other.

When our government created the LHINs 10 years ago, it was with the goal of improving local health care system planning, integration and service delivery to better meet the needs of patients in their local communities. Our government understands that local decision-making is essential to the improvement and delivery of health care, and LHINs already play an important and, indeed, essential role in achieving the goals of our Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. They understand the unique needs of their regions. They work closely with their communities to determine the local health care priorities and service needs. Over the past decade, our LHINs have developed knowledge about the health and health care needs of the communities that they serve. They've helped us to make substantial progress on reducing emergency room wait times, expanding access to care and increasing accountability. Our health care system has improved significantly as a result.

Our government believes that LHINs are ready to build on the progress that they've made over the past 10 years, and we want to leverage their expertise and their partnerships, as well as their knowledge of the unique needs of the communities they serve.

If this bill is passed, we would give our LHINs greater responsibility for home care delivery and primary care planning and make those sectors more accountable to the

public. Working with health care sector partners, all proposed changes would be done in collaboration to make sure that patients have ongoing access to the health care they depend on, and we would update patients, caregivers and our health care partners at each step along the way.

Home and community care is a critical part of our health care system. This legislation will enable home care workers to continue to do the incredible work they are doing but with the added support they need to ensure a better health care journey for Ontario patients. That's why our government is proposing to better connect our home and community care sector to the rest of our health care system.

I want to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge all of Ontario's community care access centres. I want to recognize the period of transition we're about to undertake. Last year in Ontario, community care access centres provided home care to more than 800,000 Ontarians, helping more than 200,000 Ontarians return home from hospital, and I want to thank them for that work.

Our government is transforming health care to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old, and home care is a very important part of that transformation. That's why it's so important that we pass the proposed bill before us.

I'm going to leave it to the member from Ottawa South to speak more about some of the other aspects of our health care system that are going to benefit from the legislation we are considering here today, but I want to take a moment to talk about some of the false claims that are being made about Bill 41.

First, there are claims being made that Bill 41 would give government officials or LHIN employees access to personal health information. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: This is absolutely not the case. Bill 41 would continue to protect the full privacy of personal health information. No patient health records can be accessed without the explicit consent of the patient—full stop. With the passage of the Health Information Protection Act, confidential health records have never been more secure.

0910

Lastly, with the full support of the privacy commissioner—we worked closely with him over the course of drafting this legislation and listened to his concerns and incorporated them into the legislation. With his support, we're confident that patients can rest assured, knowing their personal information is not in any way at risk with this bill.

Second, there are claims being made that the Patients First Act will increase costs and increase bureaucracy. Again, let me be clear, Bill 41 will not lead to increased costs or bureaucracy. In fact, with Bill 41, we anticipate substantial savings that will be directly reinvested in front-line services. With the transfer of home and community care services from the CCACs to the LHINs, the CCAC boards will be dissolved and administrative and management savings will be realized with the integration.

I'll mention, in terms of the sub-LHIN regions that we're creating as well, which in many cases already exist, that leadership has already been identified. In many cases, it will be through existing health links across the province, but it will not be a new office or a new bureaucracy. We will be harnessing the local expertise within the LHINs, the front-line health care expertise that can best identify what services are available, what the needs of the population are, matching those two things, and harnessing the resources of the LHINs and of the government to provide additional resources. That will not be a layer of bureaucracy, Mr. Speaker. That will be an important mechanism for local planning and implementation.

Third and lastly, there are claims being made that the government officials will be making medical decisions for patients. On this, let me be clear: This is, again, absolutely not the case. Clinical decisions have always been and will continue to be made by our clinicians.

We want to make sure that patients remain at the centre of this process, that patients are the ones that we build our health care system around, that they remain at the centre of the Patients First Act. We also want to make sure that their voices are heard, whether it is through a patient and family advisory council in their hospital, whether it is through their local LHIN or through our provincial government.

The proposed Patients First Act represents the next major step in the evolution of our health care system. It would improve and integrate planning and delivery of front-line services and increase efficiency to direct more funding to patient care within the existing system.

Speaker, as I mentioned, the member for Ottawa South will make some remarks later on this morning, but I want to take a moment to encourage all members to support this important piece of legislation so that we can improve access to quality health services, we can improve the patient experience, and we can help our communities deliver health care that truly meets their local needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? It rotates. Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm very pleased to be here this morning and participate in the third reading of Bill 41. It was interesting to hear what the minister had to say, but I'll go on with my speech and then we'll go from there.

First, I'd like to thank those people—various organizations, health care professionals and individual patients and caregivers—who came to committee during the rushed deputations for this legislation and gave their thoughts on this bill.

It was spoken quite frequently of how health care is rationed in this province. If we go back a year ago, we notice that the Auditor General highlighted that 39% of monies going into the CCAC stay within the bureaucracy and don't reach front-line patient care. Another report from the Auditor General showed that LHINs are failing the health care system.

It was just last week that we received another Auditor General's report, and I thought I would just go over some

of the highlights of that Auditor General's report, which also notes how this system is in trouble, our health care system, and in fact care is still being rationed. One headline: "More Attention Needed to Placement of High-Needs Individuals in Mental-Health Housing and Supportive Services." "More Oversight and Analysis of Child and Youth Mental-Health Agencies Needed." "eHealth Still Unfinished After 14 Years and \$8 Billion." "Ministry Needs to Improve Oversight of Physician Billing and Payment Models." "Ontario Lacks Comprehensive Provincial Mental-Health Standards."

Mr. Speaker, it speaks to quite a number of problems in this system which Bill 41 does not address. Unfortunately, this government has been charging ahead with Bill 41. From patients that I was speaking to and health care professionals, they seem to be ignoring the true issues that are occurring in the health care system. Bill 41 transforms the health care system. I'm in agreement with that, with the government, this minister. However, it transformed to a top-down structure. The government talks about more local decision-making. What this essentially does is it transforms the power back up to the ministry to control the LHINs. Unfortunately, the people who are going to lose out are the local health care providers and the patients. It also increases bureaucracy, which the minister claims it's not going to be creating, but they have already started creating the extra layers of bureaucracy in the system.

I'd like to touch a bit on what happened at committee. Nothing else can be more stunning than to hear various patient groups—Patients Canada, other patient groups—and doctor groups—the Ontario Medical Association, the Coalition of Ontario Doctors, Doctors for Justice, family physicians—none of them were consulted for this piece of legislation. None of them were consulted at all during this legislation, and they brought that forth at each step. I was quite shocked that patients were left out of this situation. So at committee we developed amendments going into this legislation. Over 90 amendments were created for this piece of legislation. Again, which is following this typical path of this government of not listening, one NDP amendment was passed, no PC amendments—we actually snuck one through on the PC side. The government members were sleeping, and we got one through, only for the government to remove the whole section in the next amendment. So 90 amendments, one NDP amendment, zero PC amendments—it's unfortunate. We brought forth amendments from the deputants who had concerns, the health care professionals and patients, and this government said no to them. Again, it's following through. They rushed the debate of this bill, they rushed it through committee, they didn't listen to any of the amendments from anybody who came with a deputation, and they're rushing through time allocation to get this bill passed by tomorrow, apparently.

We heard from Patients Canada, which I mentioned; RNAO, the nurses; OMA, the family physicians. Pharmacists wrote in, chiropractors, mental health associations. The government did not accept any of their amendments that we brought forward on their behalf. In

fact, the minister was quoted as saying that the Ontario Medical Association was as close to lying as possible in their deputation. Unbelievable that he would—trying to build a system, and the Auditor General is talking about a need for improved oversight of physician billing and payment models. The best way to fix the system, other than the Ministry of Health doing their job, is to work with family doctors to find solutions. But this government spends day in and day out vilifying their doctors and calling them liars. It's unacceptable.

This bill has not come forth—not once in committee or through debate has it given us an idea of the costs associated with creating this new system or the savings. They keep saying, "Oh, we're going to have savings." How much? We've asked this government about costs before. "The gas plants should only be a few million dollars." It was over \$1 billion. They can't estimate. We don't want estimates. We would like to actually see a study showing us how much this is going to cost us and how much this is going to save us and if that money is actually going to go back to front-line patient care—or is it going to be reinvested in the bureaucracy?

0920

I'd just like to read a little bit of what we heard at committee from various groups that were in attendance. We heard from the Patient Ombudsman. The Patient Ombudsman said that "the Patient Ombudsman's office should be the specialized single point of access for patient complaints relating to the LHINs, including the health service providers for which the LHINs are responsible, and the Patient Ombudsman should be an independent officer of the Legislature to enshrine both the appearance of independence and actual independence." We put through amendments to fix that; the government said no.

We heard from Mr. Ted Ball at the committee: "After Minister Smitherman left, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care," the bureaucracy, basically convinced the other ministers to ignore the 12-year piece of legislation, "which, if it had been implemented, would have decreased the staff of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care by 50% to 70%, and reduced the power of the ministry to micromanage local health care delivery systems through the empowerment of local communities."

They've reversed this in this legislation. They've empowered the ministry. In fact, he points out that when Dalton McGuinty became the Premier, they had five deputy ministers; we're now at over 20 deputy ministers in that office. Bill 41 reverses the previous LHIN legislation; it disempowers the LHIN board and returns the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to its original function as a centralized command-and-control bureaucracy.

The OMA, Ontario Medical Association, represents family physicians who care for 155,000 patients every day: "Ontario's doctors have been subjected to unilateral decision-making by government which has caused physicians to feel devalued and disrespected, and Bill 41 continues that trend."

“High-performing health care systems around the world respect and meaningfully engage physicians in change. It is essential for success, and this is missing with Bill 41. There was no meaningful consultation with Ontario’s doctors....

“Bill 41 demonstrates this government’s indifference to health professionals by making professional advisory committees optional.”

This government does not want to hear from health care professionals. Why would they make the committees at each LHIN optional if they don’t want to disregard what the health care professionals want to offer to the local system? It’s unfortunate that they’ve taken that step forward in dismissing the voices of the health care professionals.

The general and family practice section of OMA: Their concerns were that there was no opportunity for meaningful family doctor input in the creation of this bill, even though family doctors play a vital role within every sector of the health care system. That was assured when the Baker-Price report was introduced. This government is creating a new level of local planning, and then it goes and gives itself the power to supersede it and impose decisions that impact on how patient care is delivered.

We also heard from the chiropractors. Chiropractors have a pilot project going around this province which is improving patient care in decreasing the use of opioids in this province. They asked that they be included as a health service provider so that they’re able to implement this treatment through family health teams and through other physiotherapy clinics in order to improve the health care of those in local areas throughout the entire province. We put in an amendment on their behalf: “Include chiropractor services under ‘Professional services’”—that’s under the Home Care and Community Services Act. That was ruled out of order because that part of the act wasn’t open, but under the Local Health System Integration Act, “A person or entity that provides musculoskeletal services in a clinical setting, including physiotherapy services or chiropractic services, that is not otherwise a health service provider”—the government said no to that.

We hear when the chiropractors come and have their lobby day that the government is right behind them and working to improve their scope of practice. There’s an opportunity, a door, to work with the chiropractors when they’re transforming the health care system: Give them a strong role as a health care provider. This government is notorious for not supporting chiropractors. They cut their services when they first formed government many years ago.

We also heard from pharmacists. Pharmacists sent in a letter asking basically for the same type of status as a health service provider. Again, the government didn’t add that amendment in.

We also heard from the paramedics. Paramedics have a community paramedicine program in this province which is benefiting patients. They’re able, in between calls, to visit patients at their home, do some screening,

some monitoring, and lower admissions to hospitals, lower transportation to ERs. It’s a program that’s working. They’d be great if they worked towards a health service provider. There are many barriers that this government is not willing to work with. We asked for paramedics to be added as a health service provider so they could be utilized by the LHINs, increasing the individual health care of Ontarians throughout this province and decreasing costs. The government said no to this as well. It’s unfortunate.

We also heard from many groups and organizations, such as Addictions and Mental Health Ontario and the Canadian Mental Health Association. They are concerned that they do not receive all their funding from the government, from the LHINs—they receive a portion of their funding from the LHINs—but under this legislation, because they receive the tiniest amount of funding from the government, they’re able to be taken over by the LHINs and controlled. It’s devastating to these organizations, that rely on volunteer boards to do their fundraising and also provide their services, to have an outside government organization walk in and take them over.

We put through two amendments. We first said 75% funding, and then we cut it down to 60%, and this government said no to that.

It’s a concern. Every single organization that came to speak to us with regard to the funding aspect is concerned that this is a move by the government to take over their organizations, with the merest amount of funding, and there’s no guarantee this government won’t stop the LHINs from doing so.

If the government listened to the front-line health care professionals—we had Dr. Gandhi here. Dr. Gandhi was here, and he gave a great testimonial, a great deputation, at the Legislature. In his part of Ontario, which is up in the Collingwood area, he has his family health team, but they’ve created their own integrated network with pharmacies, labs, other doctors and specialists, and they actually share—they’ve created their own e-health system, and it’s a system that functions. Their patients are seen. They look after 60,000 patients in that area. They’ve stabilized the budget, and they’ve decreased the hospital overload by working together. Were they consulted on this?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Isn’t that health links?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’m hearing “health links.” No, it’s not health links.

What’s going on is they were not consulted. There are ideas out there from front-line health care professionals, but this government does not want to listen to them. This government doesn’t want to go forward with them. This government wants to create more bureaucracy. This government wants to empower the Minister of Health to dictate what’s going on, moving away from what Minister Smitherman did years ago. It’s unfortunate that we’re headed down this section.

As I mentioned earlier, we added in so many amendments that were shot down by this government, and it’s disappointing. It’s disappointing that this government,

under Premier Kathleen Wynne, promised to be open, accountable and transparent, and to work with the parties to create a better Ontario—they're not open; they're not accountable. They're hardly transparent, if you look at the Auditor General's report.

It's seen, through many of the bills that go through this Legislature, that they're not interested in working with the opposition parties. They rush through legislation and don't listen to any of the concerns brought forth by opposition.

We know we're going to be here, after two or maybe three more Auditor General's reports coming back, and the government is going to have to change what they're doing today.

This is setting up for failure. You created a system without involving the patient, without involving the doctor, and now you have the nurses' association rallying against this bill. How do you create a system that's going to be functioning correctly? Bureaucrats cannot deliver health care. This is a concern going forward, and it's unfortunate that we're here today, rushing through this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we ask these questions, which we didn't get answers to:

Will the bill increase more spaces in long-term care? No.

Will the bill improve access to doctors and nurse practitioners? No.

Will this improve access to mental health care? No.

Will this enable health care professionals to do their jobs? No.

0930

This bill is being more strict on our health care professionals, giving them more guidelines. The patient-doctor relationship is at risk here with this legislation. We need to empower our health care professionals to do their job in order to perform it for our patients.

Does this bill focus on the patient? Other than the title, no, it does not.

Will this bill take money away from patient services? Yes.

Will this bill increase bureaucracy? Yes.

Mr. Speaker, the PC Party stands with health care professionals and the PC Party stands with patients, but we cannot stand and support Bill 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to take the few minutes that were allocated to us to talk about a very important bill, a bill that people had been waiting for for a long time.

When the minister started his comments this morning, he laid out what needed to be done. He talked about improving access to our health care system. People want improved access. There are many groups out there, including indigenous people, francophones and minorities, that have a really tough time accessing our health care system, not to mention people living in northern or rural Ontario.

He talked about improving the patient experience. We've heard from many, many patient groups that we need to do better. He talked about a health care system that meets the needs of the people it serves. The end goal is something that the NDP supports 100%. It is something that everybody knows needs to be done.

Let's look at what the bill will really do. The minister says that there are false claims. He says that the LHIN employees won't have access to personal health records. Well, I have the amended bill in front of me, and I will read into the record what people find very, very troubling.

We have people such as Concerned Ontario Doctors who are worried about that; Doctors for Justice, who came to committee, who are worried about that; we have the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, who's worried about that; the Ontario Medical Association, Section on General and Family Practice; we have individuals who have written to us—Jennifer Sargent—and the list goes on.

Let me quote directly from the bill. First, on page 16, it says, "Powers of investigator conducting investigation." Those will be when something has happened in a community health centre, in a family health team, in an aboriginal health access centre—people who have medical records on-site. Something has happened. The LHIN, this unaccountable, non-democratic LHIN, will appoint an investigator. I read from the bill:

"An investigator conducting an investigation may,

"(a) require the production of records or anything else that is relevant to the investigation, including ... records of personal health information." It's clear. It's in the bill.

It goes on to have restrictions. The restrictions are as follows:

"An investigator shall not exercise the investigator's powers under subsections (7) and (8) to access personal health information except"—and the minister is right,

"(a) with the consent of the individual who is the subject of the personal health information; or"—and this is where it all falls apart,

"(b) in such circumstances as may be prescribed."

I cannot tell you how hard I tried to get that section out, how hard I tried to say, "Define what 'in such circumstances as may be prescribed' will mean." I am not a lawyer, so I actually asked the lawyers who sit on committee, "What does 'in such circumstances as may be prescribed' mean?" It means anything. It means whatever you want it to mean. This is where the worries come from.

It goes on to say, "If an investigator accesses personal health information under subsection ... the investigator shall"—and it goes on.

So there is no doubt—it is in the bill—that an investigator will have access to personal health records "in such circumstances as may be prescribed," without individual consent. This is why people are worried. I wish we would have taken that out. The minister recognizes how important this is. He brought it up in his remarks this morning. Yet, the bill still leaves it—"in such circumstances as

may be prescribed” would have been really easy to take it out.

I put the amendment forward. I brought the debate forward. I brought the lawyers in from the Liberal government, from legislative research, who sit there in committee and help us, but to no avail. They had their scripted notes, and they kept reading them over and over to me. It didn't matter that what they were saying did not make any sense whatsoever. They stuck to the party line. That's why people are worried.

The second thing that I wanted to put on the record is, what an opportunity lost for us to do better for the First Nations. Here, again, in the opening comments—we want to improve access. I can tell you that pretty much every indigenous Ontarian has access problems with our health care system.

The aboriginal health access centres wrote to the committee, and I want to put their two recommendations on the record. The first one is, “Add a new object of a LHIN to reflect the aboriginal health policy vision: to implement the Ontario aboriginal health policy (AHP) 1994 and its successor policies, in order to promote health, healing and reconciliation with the diverse indigenous populations across Ontario.”

I put that amendment forward, Speaker. It was voted down, and although the mandate has been there for the government to have an Ontario aboriginal health policy and an advisory committee, it has never been implemented.

Recommendation number two: “Activate and rename indigenous advisory health council.” They ask to amend LHSIA to ensure the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care activates the provincial, aboriginal and First Nations health council referred to in section 14 of the bill; that it rename the council to “indigenous advisory health council”; and that it ensure inclusion of indigenous people with senior-level subject matter expertise in service delivery and lived experience.

This has been in the bill for the last 10 years—that we were supposed to have an aboriginal and First Nations health council. It was never activated. We know indigenous people have problems with access to our health care system, yet that was never—and when I put it forward as an amendment, it was voted down.

There were also many amendments that came forward from the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario. The French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario made it clear that he wanted—we have French entities in Ontario that do work to connect with the French-language community of Ontario and that give advice to the LHINs who make the final decision. The commissioner asked that rather than—in the bill, it says that the LHINs have to engage with those entities. But “engage” means, “Yes, we received your report. Here's the trash can. We've engaged.” So all we ask, all the French Language Services Commissioner asks, is that they be consulted with. Make it a little bit more formal that all of the good work that is being done by the French-language services entities was going to be respected. They voted that down.

When I asked that the third parties who offer community services for the LHINs be covered by the French Language Services Act—because now it is clear; the commissioner has said it. He has written a report that says although the LHINs are covered by the French Language Services Act, as soon as they contract out a service, the service provider is not covered by the French Language Services Act. This means that if you are a francophone who speaks French in your home, and you're 93 years old, and you've never learned to speak English because you were busy raising your 14 kids, the PSW who comes to give you a bath doesn't speak your language.

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When you put in a complaint—all 14 kids put in a complaint that says, “I want my mom to have services in French. She's 93 years old. She doesn't speak English.” The LHINs answer that, no, because the transfer payment agency is a for-profit entity that they contracted with, they don't have to follow the French Language Services Act. When we asked to correct this, they voted that down.

But the one that takes the cake—and the one that is really, really difficult to swallow, for me—has to do with the new power that the government has given itself. This new power is the power to appoint a supervisor that takes over the board. It takes over the governance of an agency. So as soon as an agency talks against the LHINs, as soon as an agency is not in line with the direction that the LHINs want to go in, their board will be taken over. They can force a merger. You know, the supervisors are using our hospitals very sparsely, by the order of the minister, under the direction of cabinet—but not for community agencies. An unelected, unaccountable LHIN will decide to take over the governance of an agency.

Let me tell you that Prince Edward County Community Care for Seniors spoke about this. Rural Ottawa South Support Services spoke about this. St. Stephen's Community House spoke against this. Supported Training and Rehabilitation in Diverse Environments spoke about this. So did Toronto Neighbourhood Centres; the Neighbourhood Group; United Way Toronto and York region; Volunteer Toronto; West Neighbourhood House; West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre; Mission Services of London; Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario; Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors; Ontario Community Support Association; Ontario Nonprofit Network; Dr. Harold S. Trefry Memorial Centre; Evergreen Markham Stouffville Thornhill; Early Words; Hospice Dufferin; Hospice Georgina; Acclaim Health; Addictions and Mental Health Ontario; Association of Ontario Health Centres; Affiliated Services for Children and Youth; Canadian Mental Health Association; Dietitians of Canada—and the list goes on.

They all told the government that the LHINs cannot appoint a supervisor without at least the Minister of Health ordering it and the cabinet being accountable for it, because you will destroy community agencies who have served their community well in the past and will

continue to serve us well in the future. It is not because they don't agree with the LHINs that their governance should be taken away.

Bill 41 was brought forward because our home care system is broken. Nothing in this bill will fix our home care system.

My colleague will give us an example as to what happens to Ontarians when our home care system is broken, and why it is so important that we fix this privatized home care system that fails more people than it helps.

But none of that is in that bill. That's why the NDP will not be able to support it.

I leave a few minutes on the clock to share a very typical story of the failures of our home care system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise again and speak in support of the Patients First Act.

First off, I'd like to thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for his leadership on this file. I think we can all agree in this Legislature that the responsibility of being Minister of Health is really quite an incredible one, considering we spend just about half of the revenue that the people of Ontario give us on health care. It's incredibly complex.

I know that members would agree that he's responsive to them. I see members across the floor coming down all the time to speak to the minister. I know that I very much am proud to work with him.

Before the Patients First Act was drafted, we spoke and consulted with thousands of Ontarians—in fact, with over 6,000 Ontarians. We held consultations, round tables and various meetings right across the province. We spoke to doctors, nurses, personal support workers and, of course, patients about the challenges that exist in health care in Ontario.

I just want to respond to the member opposite with regard to the consultation. I don't generally like to read litanies, but I think this is important to read into the record. This is in reference to the consultations we had with the Ontario Medical Association. In April 2015, the ministry presented to and discussed with the OMA executive the Price-Baker report, from which many of the key concepts for the Patients First strategy emerged.

In June 2015, we met with the physician services committee to further discuss the report.

January through March: The ministry had significant physician engagement through discussion paper consultations led by the ministry in LHINs. This included over 6,000 individuals and organizations and nearly 200 formal submissions, including physicians and physicians' groups.

In February 2016, there was a round table on Patients First where the OMA staff were present and participated. Also in February, we received the OMA's formal submission on Patients First.

On May 30, the ministry met with the OMA CEO and president to provide advance notice of the tabling of the Patients First Act.

On June 3, we met with OMA staff and legal counsel for a detailed discussion on the components of Bill 210.

On June 8, the deputy minister and ministry officials met with the OMA primary care advisory group to further discuss Bill 210.

On July 7, the ministry provided assistance to OMA staff in answering Bill 210 questions.

On September 26, we presented Patients First to the Coalition of Regulated Health Professional Associations, and the OMA was present.

On October 13, we requested to consult on the clinical leadership components of Patients First.

There is a standing meeting that occurred at least six times between the OMA CEO and the deputy minister to discuss Patients First.

So the accusation that there was no consultation is simply not true. I want to make sure that that's on the record.

Over the last two weeks, we did have committee. We had presentations from many people. We heard from the opposition, and we've heard from them regularly, about what they felt should be in this bill and what they felt its shortcomings were. We don't always agree on these things—and I do hear back, "We didn't see our amendments passed," but you may have seen your comments and your suggestions and your concerns expressed in government amendments. So to characterize that you had no influence on that—I can see how you may feel that way, but I don't think that simply is the case.

I feel it's important to respond to the message that health care is rationed. We all know we've got a fixed budget for health care. We all know that. Every party here has made decisions on that fixed pot at some point in time, and the reality is that we're always working to use that money as best we can. Unless we start to devolve the powers for planning and collaborating down to the local level, we're not going to get the kind of system we want.

Those are all really tough choices. It's easy to say, "You should do this." It's easy for the Leader of the Opposition to say, "You know what? I'm going to build that hospital"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a little reminder that you're talking through me and not directly over there. I think you've looked over here once.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be transfixed on you.

I think that that is an easy thing to say. It's easy to promise everything to everybody. The future of health care is collaboration based on outcomes. It's people working together at the local level. At committee, I agree, we heard a great story about what doctors, I think it was in Brantford, did. I apologize if I've got it wrong. And do you know what? If we could do that across Ontario, that would be great, but we can't do that unless we build structures that have responsibility for incenting that kind of collaboration and working together.

As I said, I'm transfixed on you, and I was a bit transfixed on the consultations with the OMA.

The reality is physicians have a lot of power in our system. They have a lot of power. One out of every \$10 that Ontarians contribute comes to us, comes to doctors, okay? That's what we spend. That's a lot of power. What we need is for people to work together. The only way that we're going to do that is if we do that at the local level. This bill does this. I agree with the member opposite. We are going to continue to work together with our francophone community. I know that one of her amendments in the bill was passed. There is still much more work to be done in that regard.

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C'est très important que les services francophones augmentent parce que la première langue des personnes est très importante aux temps critiques de leur vie—la fin de vie, la démence. C'est très important.

We understand. We know that we need to do more. I've spoken directly with the French Language Services Commissioner. I know that the minister has, as well. So there's more work to be done in that regard.

There are many more things that I could say about the bill, but I think that to characterize that this is a command-and-control exercise—it is not. The purpose of this bill is to strengthen local decision-making. It's to empower people locally. I come from a LHIN where—I'm very fortunate that Champlain let us move forward on things like children's mental health. We reduced our wait times in hips and knees because we got practitioners to work together to say, "It's not good to have a year and a half waiting list for my patients. So we're going to develop a system where if you want a certain doctor, you can go to that doctor, but if you want to get your surgery right away, you can go to the next surgeon up."

That would not have happened if we had not had a local LHIN. We wouldn't be doing the things we're doing in children's mental health, youth addictions—I could go on for the rest of the day with the kind of work that's being done. That's the kind of thing that needs to happen across this province.

So I support this bill totally, and I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to it.

I did remain transfixed on you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her advocacy on this bill.

I wanted to just spend a few minutes talking about a personal story, because if you have never experienced the health care system as a patient or a family member here in Ontario, you have no idea. We all hear from constituents in our office on a daily basis about their experience, but until you are actually caught up in that vortex, you have no idea.

I have been a nurse for many, many years and I thought I knew the system. My husband was very sick this past year with lymphoma, and I have his permission to talk about this. He experienced a fractured leg while he was in the hospital, and he had to live with a fractured leg for six and a half months while he was undergoing

chemotherapy. He got to experience the home care system for a very long period of time.

I can tell you, from the date of being discharged from the hospital to the readmission to finally have his leg fixed two weeks ago, he had home care almost every day. But there are tremendous problems in the system, from trying to actually get a meeting to get home care planned with discharge planners in the hospital and with home care case managers in the hospital, which never happened in my case—and I mean, I'm an advocate; I know how the system works; it never happened—to my husband arriving home by ambulance with no equipment other than a bed and a wheelchair, because I couldn't get a meeting with them, so I didn't know what the CCAC was going to be providing and what they weren't going to be providing, what they were going to be delivering to my house.

Home care, personal support workers—I never got any care for the first three weeks. So I have a very sick patient—husband—with a lymphoma, who has had his first chemotherapy. He has a spiral fracture of his leg, unstable. He's basically on bedrest in my home, and for three weeks I had no personal support.

I had a case manager call me maybe on day three that he was home and basically said she didn't think that I needed any support, that I had agreed to take him home from the hospital and that she didn't think I needed any support to help get him into the shower or get him onto a commode chair or whatever. So I had to rely on family members to actually do that.

At week three, his case was changed to another case manager at the CCAC who finally came and visited. That was the only visit from a case manager in six months, the only call from a case manager in six months.

Then the home care finally started, after three weeks. It was like a revolving door. We've heard from the member from Nickel Belt about elderly patients being bathed by a different personal support worker every day. That was how it was. For the first three weeks, it was a different personal support worker every day. So every day I had to train a personal support worker on his care.

We saw a registered nurse or an RPN for the first week, and it is like piecework. It's like when I worked in the canning factory as a teenager. The nurse would come in and she'd change the antibiotic in the IV pump, and away she would go. There was no holistic care of patients in the system.

So here we are discharging patients one and two days post-op. We're sending them home to their families, many of whom don't have a nurse to look after them. Thankfully, in this situation, there was one; right?

What are people doing who do not have someone to advocate for them, someone to actually look after them—which is why we have all of these readmissions to hospital? And then, when you actually get the home care workers in, sometimes they don't show up. They're sick; I get that. Maybe they're sick. But you don't even get a call from the scheduling office of the providers to say that nobody is showing up. You normally have a visit at 10 in the morning, and you're waiting until 2 or 3 in the

afternoon. You're calling and saying, "Is anybody coming?" "No. We don't have anybody to give you." "Well, do you know what? Maybe you should have told me that at 9 o'clock this morning."

That happened on a fairly regular—I would say that at least once a week, somebody didn't show up. So if I had plans, if I had booked a meeting in my constituency office because I knew that there was going to be somebody at my house for an hour or an hour and a half, I couldn't even get to that meeting.

The system is broken, even the way the system is parcelled out in home care. Saint Elizabeth was actually my care provider, but they only have about 15% of the contract in the Niagara Peninsula. So you've got this agency trying to provide full-time jobs for personal support workers but in fact they don't have enough of the work to actually keep all of these people employed on a full-time basis, and so they let their services out to a different home care provider. So now they're working part-time at two places when, in fact, if one non-profit provider had the entire Niagara region or had the entire city of Hamilton, they could actually provide regular work schedules for these personal support workers. They could keep them all employed full-time. Patients would actually have care, and more regular care, but when you've got ParaMed doing this and ComCare doing this and Saint Elizabeth doing this, it makes for such a piecework system that I have to say that patients at the end the day are not getting the care they deserve in this province. Something has to be fixed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to have the member from Welland back in the Legislature with us today. It's so important, I think, that the minister hears that story, because we're all hearing those stories every day in our constituency offices, where the current system isn't working to meet the needs of the patients who are out there. It's a broken system, as the member describes. She has lived it first-hand. She's also a nurse. She's also an MPP. She also knows how the system is supposed to work and knows the various players in the system, yet it was very difficult for her to try to make the system work in her own personal case because of just how damaged the system is.

The front-line health care workers don't exist to make it work properly. That's the thing that I think is most confusing and frustrating for people who are trying to navigate the system: The front-line workers just aren't there when we need them. They're hearing from the government constantly, "We're investing in more home care. We're investing in more home care." They're taking money out of the hospital system to invest in our home care network of services, but while services are being cut at the hospitals, services are also being cut in home care, and we can't meet the demand that's there.

I commend the member from Welland for bringing her story to the Legislature this morning because it's not an unfamiliar story to all of us who are dealing with this on an everyday basis. It's very, very frustrating.

What is the government doing in Bill 41? They're doubling down on the same types of policies that got us in this mess in the first place. I know this wasn't the minister responsible for bringing the local health integration networks and creating the new level of bureaucracy. There have been a couple of different health ministers since that occurred eight or nine years ago. However, what the government is doing with the new iteration of LHINs is creating an even larger bureaucracy, as has been described by our critic the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. The title of the bill shouldn't be the Patients First Act; it should be the Bureaucrats First Act, because that's what we're actually seeing, the creation of more layers of bureaucrats, more people sitting in offices, pushing pencils and paper—people who aren't actually providing the services that the member from Welland just described are so necessary.

The consistency that should be provided for those services simply doesn't exist. People are telling me every day that it's a different personal support worker who shows up to provide the service, if one actually shows up. What she just described is exactly the stories that we're getting in our constituency offices on a daily basis. Is this piece of legislation going to fix that or is it going to make it worse? I would argue, and I know our critic would argue, that it's going to put up more barriers to people trying to access the services.

The reason is that the government hasn't listened to those who are integral in providing those services. Those who have been trained to provide the services that we require are being ignored when this piece of legislation is being put together, when it's being debated at committee and when it's being debated in the Legislature. We can do so much better.

This should be the Bureaucrats First Act, not the Patients First Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time is up for debate.

Mr. Hoskins has moved third reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This being the morning meeting, this vote will take place after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day? Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. David Orazietti: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize Jozsef Horvath from my constituency office, who is

here in the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Jozsef.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to welcome Drew Woods from Parkdale-High Park to Queen's Park today, in the gallery.

Hon. Jeff Leal: They haven't arrived yet, but I will introduce them. From the great riding of Peterborough, I'd like to welcome individuals from the municipality of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen. They will be in the east gallery. We'll have Mayor Ron Gerow, Deputy Mayor Jim Martin, and Councillors David Gerow, Barry Pomeroy and Hart Webb. We want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome, from the Ontario Principals' Council, Mary Linton and Steve Blok, who are here at Queen's Park today in the members' east gallery. Welcome.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to welcome a special guest today—it's her first time in the Legislature: Ellen Hastie from London.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to welcome to the House, from the Principals' Council, Steve Toffelmire from Prince Charles Public School in the great downtown of Trenton. Welcome.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce to the assembly Michelle Roe, my executive assistant, and Brooke Folan, my constituency assistant from Sarnia-Lambton, here with us at Queen's Park today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome Sylvia Dixon, a constituent, to question period. She's here to watch her grandson William, who is a legislative page. Welcome.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Principals' Council. I met with John Hamilton, who is from the Durham board; and Nancy Brady, the principal of Ridgemont High School in Ottawa South. She's also a constituent. Welcome.

Mr. Steve Clark: Fast times at Ridgemont High?

Mr. John Fraser: That's exactly right.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I too would like to introduce Steve Blok, who is here from my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, with the Principals' Council. I will be meeting with him later today.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome members of CUPE 4914, led by their president, Sonia Yung. Carrie Lynn Poole is in the audience today, also from CUPE Ontario.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming a number of the leaders of our Ukrainian Canadian community who are here today to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada.

We have with us Lidia Narozniak, who is the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Ontario provincial council; Andrii Veselovskyi, who is the consul general of Ukraine to Toronto; and we have a number of other leaders in the community, whose names I will mention: Lydia Cymbaluk; Daria Diakowsky; Bozhena Gembatiuk-Fedyna; Victor Hetmanczuk; Alexandra Hetman-

czuk; Tamara Ivanochko; Walter Kish; Oksana Kornilova; Natalie Korpan; Lada Kozak; Valentina Kuryliw; Oleh Lesiuk; Marc Marzotto; Myroslava Oleksiuk; Bob Onyshuk; Myron Pyzyk; Lesia Spolsky; Marijka Stadeny; Paul Strathdee; Krystina Waler; Borys Myckhaytics; and Antonina Kuksenko. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce probably the best constituency office staff in Ontario and Canada: Whitney McWilliam, Marlene Bainbridge, Trish Fifield and Penny Rice. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a lot of guests this morning visiting Queen's Park. Let me begin by welcoming our guests from the Salvation Army. From the Ontario central east division, the divisional commander, Lieutenant Colonel Sandra Rice; the divisional secretary of Ontario central east public relations, Mr. Andrew Burditt; the Ontario camping ministries assistant executive director, Captain Deana Zelinsky; executive director, Toronto housing and homeless supports, Mr. Bradley Harris; and executive director, Belinda's Place, Mrs. Rochelle Saunders.

From Ontario Great Lakes division, divisional commander Major Everett Barrow; the divisional secretary of Ontario Great Lakes public relations, Major Patricia Phinney; Ontario director of women's ministries, Major Violet Barrow; program area commander Major Margaret McLeod; program area commander, Lake Erie region, Major Glenda Davis; the divisional emergency disaster services director, Major Alan Hoeft; and Colonel Marguerite Ward.

I also want to welcome my former principal at the Toronto District School Board, Principal Mary Linton, here today. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: On behalf of my colleague Michael Harris, MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga—and the guests of page William Dixon—we'd like to welcome his grandmother Sylvia Dixon, who's joining us in the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: The Ontario Principals' Council are here at Queen's Park today, and their executives are also in attendance this morning. I'd like to welcome Kelly Kempel from Waterloo, Mary Linton from Toronto, Larry O'Malley from Halton, Steve Toffelmire from Hastings-Prince Edward, Heather Highet from Limestone, Andrea Taylor from Halton, Steve Blok from Renfrew, and Nancy Brady from Ottawa-Carleton. All are practising principals—and Ian McFarlane, the executive director. Please welcome them.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park three members of the Whitby Sunrise Rotary club—Dave Robinet, Larry Greenland and Doug Byers—as well as the students from Donald A. Wilson high school, from the town of Whitby.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the students from John English middle school in the town of Mimico, in my riding.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today one of our fabulous principals from

Burlington, from M.M. Robinson High School, Andrea Taylor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

UKRAINIAN IMMIGRATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Centre is seeking unanimous consent that all members pay tribute to the 125th. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sharing my time today with the member from Etobicoke Centre.

It's with great pleasure that I rise to mark the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. Over the decades, Ukrainian immigrants have built homes, started businesses and grown communities here, all the while making our province a better place to live. Today, Ontario is fortunate to be home to the largest number of Ukrainian Canadians in the country.

The year 2016 is a special year for this vibrant community. Back in August, we all joined in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Ukrainian independence, and we're proud that Canada was the first Western country to recognize a free and independent Ukraine. As well, the member from Etobicoke Centre and I joined Prime Minister Trudeau and Ukrainian cabinet members to discuss opportunities brought by the new Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, a partnership that holds a great deal of potential.

While we celebrate these milestones, we also share the pain of the Ukrainian people, who, as we speak, are fighting to defend Ukraine's independence, protecting the same values that their families advanced in Canada over the past century: freedom, justice and human rights. We continue to condemn the Putin regime's aggression towards Ukraine, standing firm in our support for Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. I'm proud of the humanitarian aid our government sent to support the Ukrainian people as they defend their democracy.

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But our country is not blameless, Mr. Speaker. During the First World War, Ukrainian Canadians were among those interned by our federal government. In the 1930s, millions of Ukrainians died in the Holodomor, a genocide few countries would acknowledge.

We are, however, learning from this painful history. As you will remember, Mr. Speaker, the Holodomor Memorial Day Act was the first-ever piece of Ontario legislation sponsored by all three parties, because we all recognized the importance of remembrance and education. It's why our government added the internment of Ukrainian Canadians and the study of the Holodomor to

Ontario's high school curriculum. Now every young person in Ontario will learn about these dark chapters in our history.

Let's honour the Ukrainian immigrants who over the years chose Ontario as their new home and thank their children for helping us build a better province. Slava Ukraini! Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you, Premier. Today we commemorate 125 years of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. Here in the gallery we have with us leaders of the Ukrainian Canadian community. Some of them are immigrants to Canada from Ukraine. Some of them are the children and grandchildren of immigrants to Canada from Ukraine.

My mother and my grandparents were immigrants to Canada from Ukraine. My grandparents Ivan and Olena came to Canada fleeing oppression and seeking a better life, like so many people who have immigrated to Canada from Ukraine over the past 125 years. They were incredibly proud of their Ukrainian heritage, but they were also incredibly proud to be Canadian. In fact, I've said it many times—many of you have heard me say this before—my grandparents are the proudest Canadians that I've ever met.

To ensure that I learned about my Ukrainian heritage, my parents and my grandparents insisted that I attend Saturday school. This was not unique to me; this is common to members of our Ukrainian Canadian community. After Saturday school—every Saturday—my grandparents would pick me up. We'd have lunch and my grandfather would sit down with me and help me with my Saturday school homework. We would learn the Ukrainian language, culture, history, traditions etc.

I have to admit, Speaker, when I was a teenager and a kid I didn't really enjoy Saturdays. I really didn't enjoy doing homework on Saturday afternoons, either. There was one day in particular where I was particularly frustrated. I was struggling and I said to my grandfather, "Dido"—I called him Dido—"I don't want to do this anymore. I want to stop." And he said, "Yvan, you cannot stop." He said, "Let me tell you why. I'm incredibly proud of my heritage and my homeland and I think that if you learn more, you will be, too."

But he also said, "I want you to learn about the history of our people, the Ukrainian people, because so many of them came here to Canada—they came before you did, they came before I did—and they helped to make this country great. I want you to learn about the people who made Canada great."

That's why I'm so proud to stand here today, Speaker, and that's, I think, the things that we are celebrating here today.

For 125 years, Ukrainian Canadians have come to Canada seeking a better life, and for 125 years Canada has supported them. That is why Canada was the first country in the world to recognize Ukraine's independence 25 years ago.

That is why this Legislature was amongst the first in the world to recognize that the Holodomor was a genocide. That is why our government has ensured that the Holodomor and the internment of Ukrainian Canadians here in Canada is included in the Ontario curriculum—so that every young person can learn about the Holodomor and can learn about the internment. That is why our government supported the Holodomor mobile classroom, which will support the teaching of the Holodomor around Ontario.

That is why this government—our government and the government of Canada federally—have condemned Russia's occupation of Ukraine and have stood firmly in our support of Ukraine sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Speaker, for 125 years, Ontarians of Ukrainian descent have left a historic mark on our province. Their contributions span communities across Ontario and every riding represented here. They have impacted our economic, our political, our cultural and our social life.

Ukrainian Canadians assisted in the creation and the conception of multiculturalism that has since shaped Canada into a model of diversity, of equity and of prosperity. For 125 years, Ukrainian Canadians have played an important role in the development of Ontario into one of the best places in the world to live, and they have contributed to making Canada the great country that it is today.

Ukraine's most prolific poet, Taras Shevchenko, once famously said:

Remarks in Ukrainian.

Translated, this means: "Teach, read and learn from others, but be proud of that which is your own."

Today, I think we feel what my grandparents would feel, what the people here feel, what their parents and grandparents would feel, what prior generations of Ukrainians who have come to Canada for 125 years would feel if they were here today: proud of the contributions that Ukrainian Canadians have made to Canada over the past 125 years, proud of their Ukrainian heritage and proud to be Canadian.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm honoured to rise today, on behalf of Patrick Brown and the PC caucus, in recognition of 125 years of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. I, too, would like to welcome all the visitors from the Ukrainian Canadian community joining us today. I've had the pleasure over the last couple of years, as our cultural liaison with the community, of getting to know some of them much better, and I've appreciated all of the interactions that we have shared.

It was in 1891 when the first two Ukrainian immigrants stepped onto Canadian soil. Both from the region of Nebyliv in western Ukraine, Wasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypiw arrived in Quebec City on the S.S. Oregon. They travelled to Canada's west and propagated the message of the vast Canadian farmlands back to Ukraine. Their arrival marked the beginning of Ukrainian immigration to Canada.

Ukrainians have a long, proud and rich history in Canada. For 125 years, Canadians of Ukrainian heritage have been contributing to the essential fabric of Canada and Ontario. While doing so, they have remembered their traditions, language and culture, enriching communities all across this great province.

Today, Canada and Ukraine continue to enjoy an incredibly strong bond. A prime example of this solidarity has been Canada's unwavering support during the crisis in Ukraine.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Ukrainian Canadian community for their incredible mobilization and organization in support of the people of Ukraine. It is through various medical, charitable and political initiatives that they demonstrate the very best of what it means to be Canadian.

Today, our country is home to well over 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian heritage, with close to one third of them making their home here in Ontario and over 100,000 living right here in the GTA. Indeed, many of our nation's best and brightest, from our generals to our judges, from our politicians to our business leaders, proudly call themselves Canadians of Ukrainian descent.

In 2011, to mark the anniversary of the arrival of the first Ukrainian settlers, former Progressive Conservative MPP Gerry Martiniuk introduced the Ukrainian Heritage Day Act, which sets September 7 as Ukrainian Heritage Day in Ontario, a day we celebrate every year.

In closing, we are fortunate to live in a province and in a country where all people, people from different communities and walks of life, work together, understand and support one another. I look forward to working with the Ukrainian Canadian community in the coming years, and I congratulate them on the 125th anniversary of their immigration to Canada. Thank you. Slava Ukraini.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If I might first say that I am a bit jealous of my colleague the member from Etobicoke Centre. He has such a wonderful grasp of Ukrainian culture and language. He's able to quote my namesake, Taras Shevchenko, in poetry, and it's beautiful. My friend, we should get together, and maybe I could learn a few words. It's wonderful. Thank you for your wonderful tribute.

I'm pleased to join many other colleagues in the House to recognize the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada today, on behalf of the Ontario NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath.

Ukrainians first came to Canada in the 19th century. The initial influx came as Canada promoted immigration to farmers. My great-grandfather, John Natyshak, was among those immigrating to Saskatchewan in 1898. Like so many other Ukrainians, he came by boat, with the promise of a better future. He purchased a 160-acre parcel of land for \$10 and began to attempt—attempt, Speaker—to tame the Prairies. I'm told that my aunt Audrey Hately still has the receipt for that 160-acre parcel of land.

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During the First World War, thousands of Ukrainian Canadians, however, were imprisoned as enemy aliens due to their origins in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It's important to note that in 2011, Ukrainian Canadians numbered around 1.2 million, or 3.7% of our county's population, and many of them are Canadian-born citizens. Ukrainian Canadians are the ninth-largest ethnic group, and Canada has the world's third-largest Ukrainian population, behind Ukraine itself and Russia. Slightly more than 110,000 Ukrainian Canadians speak Ukrainian, and more than half live in the Prairie provinces.

Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants have left a profound mark on the development of Ontario and western Canada. They have made, and continue to make, remarkable contributions to Canada in the fields of culture, the economy, politics and sports. Distinguished Canadians of Ukrainian ethnic origin include Stephen Worobetz, Sylvia Fedoruk, Peter Liba, Ray Hnatyshyn, Roy Romanow, Gary Filmon, Ernie Eves, Mary Batten, Roberta Bondar—the first Canadian woman to walk in space—as well as many players in the NHL such as Johnny Bucyk, Wayne Gretzky, Dale Hawerchuk, Mike Bossy and a little-known NHL player, my brother Mike Natyshak, who played for the Quebec Nordiques. Nobody would know him because he only played a little bit. Sorry, Mike. He was Ukrainian.

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: He'll like that. Thank you very much.

In the 19th century, the Russian Empire ruled 80% of Ukraine. The rest lay in the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Galicia, Bukovina and Transcarpathia. As serfs in Austria-Hungary until 1848 and in the Russian Empire until 1861, Ukrainians suffered from economic and national oppression. When attempts to establish an independent Ukrainian state from 1917 to 1921 collapsed, the greater portion of Ukraine became a republic in the USSR, while Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia divided the remainder. Following the Second World War, the western Ukrainian territories were annexed by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The first major immigration—around 170,000 rural poor primarily from Galicia and Bukovina—occurred between 1891 and 1914. Ivan Pylypiw and Wasyl Eleniak, who arrived in 1891, are generally considered the first two Ukrainian immigrants to Canada. Immigration grew substantially after 1896 as Canada promoted the immigration of farmers from eastern Europe.

While the Prairie provinces absorbed the bulk of the first two waves of immigration, Ontario played an enormous part as well. In the 1950s through the 1960s, only a few Ukrainians entered the country annually. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, limited renewed immigration from Poland and the Soviet Union saw perhaps 10,000 Ukrainians and Soviet Ukrainian Jews come to Canada.

Ukrainian Canadians have made an indelible mark on our nation's fabric. From all aspects of our social lives,

Ukrainian Canadians can be proud of their contributions to the cultural mosaic of Canada. I am proud to count myself as one of them and proud to stand in a Legislature that has recognized the unique and special relationship that we have as Ukrainian Canadians, especially in recognizing the Holodomor genocide and enshrining that into the curriculum of this province.

I want to thank the members of this Legislature for recognizing that important cultural aspect, and I thank you, Speaker, for allowing us this opportunity to highlight this heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very thoughtful and kind words on this anniversary. Diakuj.

What I'd like to now do is to let you know that I still have the same passion to do the job but you might not be hearing me. I would advise that you listen very carefully.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier.

I would like everyone in this House to think about where they were on November 10, 2016. It was a particularly windy day in Ontario, and I can tell you what this government was doing on November 10. This government was exporting surplus power, so much surplus power that Ontario might have set a record for power wasted.

How much power did they waste on November 10? They wasted \$9.4 million worth of power. That might have been a record day for this government in terms of wasted power.

So my question to the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not helping. I'm getting attention for your leader.

It does seem like my calm request is not going to be heard, so I may have to move as quickly as possible to get control. Please don't make me get up again. I'd appreciate that.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I guess the government is a little bit touchy when it comes to their power giveaways, the electricity giveaways.

My question, Mr. Speaker: Was the government trying to set a new Ontario record that day for surplus electricity?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to be able to stand and talk about remembering, because I know that every Ontarian remembers where they were in August

2003, when that government let our system disintegrate and that blacked right out.

I know we will continue to ensure that we invest in a system that is clean and reliable. I know that they don't—
Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We had nothing to do with that blackout. That's a lie and you know it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

We're now moving to warnings, and if it continues, we'll go into naming. I'm getting control today.

Finish, please. You have one wrap-up.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of touchy, you know what, Mr. Speaker? We make sure that we have a reliable system. We invested, we've made it clean, and we're going to continue to have a great system, something that we can be proud of.

When it comes to exports, we are an exporter, and the net benefit of those exports to ratepayers was \$230 million in 2015, much better than actually having to spend \$500 million, like they used to. They used to have to pay to import electricity. We—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I have a serious question for the Premier. Rather than reinventing history and talking about a power failure in Ohio, I would appreciate an answer.

We have a serious problem with surplus power in the province. On November 10, we gave away \$9.4 million worth of surplus power. How much did we get for that? Any guesses? It's \$144,000. We gave away \$9.4 million worth of surplus power, and we got back \$144,000. This is embarrassing for the province of Ontario. We are hurting our businesses. We are subsidizing competitors.

My question to the Premier—I know she's going to want to pass this off because she doesn't want to assume responsibility for this failure, but my question is, did the governors from New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania actually send us a thank-you note? And if so, what did the thank-you note say for all your great work on behalf of Pennsylvania, New York—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's obvious that the Leader of the Opposition has no idea how the system works. At the end of the year, when you actually look at the books, we made \$230 million.

But let's not forget: In 2003, when they had the blackout, when they let the system crash, they spent \$400 million—

Mr. Jim Wilson: It was a tree branch in Ohio, and you know it. Stop making up history.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is warned.

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Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As I was saying, in 2003, Ontario paid \$400 million to import electricity. We've made the investments now to ensure that we don't have to import electricity, that we're an exporter. We created a system in which we can make money now. We made \$230 million at the end of the year in 2015; in 2014, \$300 million.

We've made sure that our system is clean; we no longer have coal. It is reliable. It is something that they left in tatters and we had to fix.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier—and once again, I hope the Premier will eventually answer one of these questions rather than passing the buck. It's bad enough that we're giving away surplus power, subsidizing our competitors in the States, and the government doesn't want to answer that, but we also have this fire sale of Hydro One, which has been denounced, with 200 municipalities passing resolutions saying that it's a bad idea, 80% of Ontarians in polls saying, "Don't proceed."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the Minister of Housing are warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Go ahead and blame each other, but you all have control of yourselves.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Financial Accountability Officer is saying that this fire sale of Hydro One is a bad deal. Then you've got the cloud over the fundraiser for the Liberal Party that happened just after the fire sale, by high-powered bankers. And now we have a lawsuit. Now the government is under a cloud of a lawsuit alleging wrongdoing with this fire sale.

My question is, with all these concerns, with all this opposition inside Queen's Park, the legislative offices, municipalities, and now a lawsuit, will the Premier do the right thing and put a pause on the fire sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it comes to Hydro One, the broadening of the sale is actually allowing us to invest in infrastructure and transit, so much of it that I think it's important for me to talk about some of the great work that's being done by the Ministry of Transportation and the Minister of Finance—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Here are just some of the projects that were committed to through the 2015 and 2016 Ontario budgets: \$13.5 billion for GO regional ex-

press rail; 12 new GO stations along Kitchener, Barrie, Lakeshore East; GO rail service—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you're going to play, I'm going to win. The member from Dufferin-Caledon is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: —GO bus service between Cambridge and Milton; \$43 million for a proposed multi-modal hub in Kitchener; double the number of weekday trips along the Kitchener GO corridor.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Highway 69 is being four-laned, turning it into a 400-series highway. There are investments happening—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Three questions on hydro and no answer—obviously the Premier does not want to be on the record on hydro. So I'm going to try something different and maybe the Premier will choose to answer this, this time on health care. Hopefully, you don't pass this question as well.

The government's talking points have been that the wait times are at their lowest, but we found out in the Auditor General's report that this Liberal talking point is not true.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Etobicoke North is warned.

If you haven't got the message, I'll move right to naming, which I am loath to do.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Auditor General said that patients visiting the emergency room or having surgery are waiting longer now than any time in the past 20 years. This is directly from the Auditor General, in complete contradiction with what the Liberals have been saying on wait times. Patients are being rationed health care in this province. Patients are suffering.

My question to the Premier directly: The Auditor General says the wait times are the worst in 20 years. Will you tell us the truth? How have you allowed to this to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand, you sit. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, it gives me the opportunity to say, thank goodness we started measuring wait times in this province. It was that party—it was the opposition party that didn't even bother to measure wait times for important surgical procedures, for wait times in the ERs.

What we found when we came into office in 2003, as a result of that opposition party when they were in gov-

ernment under Mike Harris—we found that we had the longest wait times in all of Canada. Now, as we measure those consistently year after year and make that information publicly available, we have some of the shortest, if not the shortest wait times for surgical procedures, for ER wait times. We have the shortest wait times in the entire country for access to MRI and CT and ultrasound. We've seen a decrease, despite an increasing population, in the wait times in our ERs. That's because we're measuring it and that's because we fixed their mess, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier—this is my fifth question today and I have yet to receive an answer from the Premier.

A story that was shared with my office was the story of Filomina Zita. She is 81 years old and she was taken to the hospital last week after suffering a stroke. Ms. Zita was placed on a stretcher along the hallway of an emergency room, against a wall. She remained there for 32 hours with a hospital gown tucked under her head as a pillow. When her family asked if this was normal, the hospital staff said, "This is our Ontario health care system. Yes, it is."

Mr. Speaker, I didn't get an answer on having the longest wait times in 20 years according to Auditor General. Now we have got the story of Filomina Zita. My question, directly to the Premier, and I would appreciate an answer is how can you allow this to happen in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has pointed us in the direction of how we can continue to make improvements, but it's important to remind the public that the leader of the official opposition, who speaks so eloquently about the need for health care services—in 2013, it was Patrick Brown's government in Ottawa that closed the Health Council of Canada. In 2012, it was Patrick Brown's government in Ottawa that closed the National Aboriginal Health Organization. He was part of the government that cut hundreds of jobs from Health Canada, Mr. Speaker. He voted for a budget that axed the Canadian immigration interim federal program for health care for refugees, and in 2011 he was part of a government that unilaterally announced they would scale back federal health transfers, costing the provinces \$36 billion in health care over 10 years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please tell me no, after recognizing your voice. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, what do you think? Order, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, for the sixth time I have a question for the Premier. I have yet to have a

single question answered today. Maybe on the sixth time, we'll finally get an answer or a response.

Hearing these Liberal spins—all of a sudden I was leading the government. You just shake your head at how desperate they are to divert responsibility.

Back to the Auditor General on health care: The Auditor General—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. You want to take that chance? The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is warned.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: In each of the hospitals the Auditor General visited, only one operating room remained open on evenings, weekends or holidays, and that was just for emergency surgeries. They closed operating rooms for March break and from anywhere between two and 10 weeks in the summer. That's unacceptable. Doctors are willing to work, they want to work; hospitals have the rooms and space available; patients need the surgery, but it's this Liberal government that is stopping them.

1110

Mr. Speaker, for the last time today, will the Premier finally answer a question and say how she has allowed this erosion of health care to take place—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We need to remember that it was his party, in the last election, that promised to cut 100,000 jobs, many of them in health care. In fact, it was his party that fired 6,000 nurses in this province and it was his party that closed 10,000 hospital beds. I have no doubt that just like under their party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Thank you.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have no doubt that just like in 2003—under their party's leadership in government, we had electricity brownouts and blackouts. With that party in power again, we will have a health care brownout.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question?

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier began this session by promising a reset. I hoped that this signalled that people would see the bold change that is needed in this province, but since September, instead of making hydro more affordable, the Premier is still selling Hydro One. Instead of fixing our health care system—new data shows that 60% of our hospitals have an unsafe level of overcrowding. Instead of creating opportunity and good jobs—young people are earning less and struggling to find work.

People can't wait forever. When will Ontarians see some action on these files that they need to see action on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On a range of issues that the leader of the third party has referenced, we are working. I don't know if the leader of the third party remembers the throne speech, but we made an announcement in the throne speech that we would be reducing people's electricity costs as of January 1, taking the provincial portion of the HST off their bills. That was an idea that had come from many places, including from the third party. So we are moving forward, we are taking action.

We need to look at what's happening in the economy in Ontario. Look at the number of jobs that have been created. Look at the fact that we are leading the country in economic growth. We recognize that there is more to be done. We recognize that everyone needs to feel that growth. But we are on a path that is leading to economic growth in this province, which is leading the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People across Ontario want to have a reason to be hopeful. The thing is, they know what a great place this can be, but they're worried. They're worried that even though life is tough today, their kids, the next generation, won't have the opportunities they did. Unless we see some big changes, it's only going to make life harder here in Ontario. It's going to make it harder to create a good life here.

Will this Premier tell Ontarians why she didn't use this past session to make the changes that people need to see?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about the changes that we're making. Let's talk about the investment in 100,000 child care spaces that we are making. Let's talk about the fact that just this morning we made an announcement about community benefits projects that are going to tie job creation and training opportunities for young people, who otherwise would not have access to the job market, to the building of infrastructure—infrastructure that the third party does not support building, but we are building, and we're tying job creation to that infrastructure.

Those are the kinds of changes that are leading to the growth that we are seeing in the province. Those are the kinds of changes that we are making that will ensure a bright future for this province, and that is exactly what government exists to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People who own or work for a small business know that skyrocketing hydro costs are threatening their future. Hospitals are overcrowded and underfunded. The Premier, who is a former education minister and trustee, has let schools crumble and repair backlogs grow. It is harder than ever to get a good job in this province with benefits and decent wages.

That's not what people voted for. They're disappointed because they expected so much more from this Premier. With one more day in the session, will the Premier commit to the action that people need to see to make life better for them and their kids here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party is asking whether we will commit to rebuilding and renovating and building new schools, yes, we will. We're doing that. If the leader of the third party is asking whether we will work on wait times, whether we will make sure that people have access to primary care, whether we will make sure that they have more direct access by putting in place legislation that will guarantee that: Yes, we will, and we are doing—

Ms. Catherine Fife: After 13 years, why start now?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party is asking whether we will make tuition free for low-income students in this province, yes, we will. We are doing that so that every young person in this province who can will go to post-secondary and will have the life that they deserve and that they are capable of.

Yes, we are doing all those things.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well, but what I have to ask is, why is it that after 13 years of Liberals in charge in this province, things have gotten so bad? That's the question that this Premier needs to answer.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General, on the health care file alone, has confirmed it: 60% of our hospitals are dangerously overcrowded. St. Mary's hospital in Kitchener and Grand River Hospital in Waterloo are regularly overcrowded, but that's okay because I guess people can just go to Guelph, right? No. Guelph General has been overcrowded for two and a half years.

How many people in Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph have been treated in hallways or gotten an infection in an overcrowded hospital?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party referenced my work as a school trustee, and I know, as a former educator and school trustee, she will understand that when we came into office and the graduation rate in this province from high school was 68%, we thought that was not adequate. The graduation rate now is 85.5%.

The changes that we have made in this province in education, in health care, in investment in infrastructure, in investment in a clean electricity grid that's reliable—those are all changes that affect people's lives every single day.

Now, is there more to do? Is there more that we need to do to make sure that health care and education and electricity all work for people? Absolutely. But has there been improvement on our watch? Absolutely.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Toronto hospitals are overcrowded as well. It means going to the hospital could leave you sicker than when you went in. Here in Toronto, North York General, SickKids, St. Joseph's Health Centre, Toronto General, Sunnybrook and St. Mike's are all overcrowded.

Will the Premier tell us how many people in these hospitals here in Toronto have been treated in a hallway and how many got an infection because of overcrowding in Toronto's hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do understand that negativity is a tactic. It's a strategy. It's something that opposition parties choose to use, and I understand that it is their job to point out where there are challenges and where there needs to be improvement.

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But I am not going to buy into the denigration of the health care system in this province. I am not going to buy into the notion that somehow the hospitals and the health care workers in this province are not doing an excellent job, because they are. I know that because I go into those hospitals. I talk to the people who are working in those hospitals.

My first grandchild was born in North York General. It's a fantastic hospital. Sunnybrook hospital is in my riding. It's a fantastic hospital that delivers wonderful service. That's the health care system in Ontario.

Is there more to do? Absolutely. There's \$345 million for hospitals in the budget, another \$140 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's the government that's not doing a good job when it comes to the hospitals: four years of frozen budgets, year and year after that of under-inflationary funding. That's the problem in our hospital system, and it's leading to a crisis of overcrowding. The Premier is denying it yet again, just as she did yesterday.

An 85% occupancy, that's what's considered a safe level for hospitals. But according to the Auditor General, 60% of Ontario's hospitals are overcrowded. Some are filled to over 100% capacity. In 2014, the president of the Canadian Medical Association described how hospitals deal with occupancy rates that are over 100% and people being put in over-capacity beds. Here's what he said: "What they really are, are windowless nooks, crannies and broom closets—anywhere we can squeeze in a stretcher or a bed."

When will this government fund hospitals properly and develop policies to stop—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, there's always more work to be done, and that's why we introduced and will be voting on the Patients First Act shortly. I look forward to the response of the third party.

I actually would prefer to take the perspective, Mr. Speaker, of my critic in the NDP party, and I agree with her on this point, where she rightly said that—she was speaking initially about Ontario's cancer services, saying they are one of the best in the world, which is true. Then she went on to say that we have an excellent health care system and an excellent cancer care system. I happen to agree with that assessment.

In fact, literally every third-party analysis of our health care system ranks it as the best or one of the best in the entire country.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Premier.

Speaker, this Liberal government doesn't want to take a clear stand when it comes to road tolls. That's because Liberal members outside of the downtown core know their constituents can't afford them, because they know they can't afford—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's because they know that they can't afford to pay new tolls. Those members need to stand up for their constituents. Will the Premier allow her members to vote with their constituents and against road tolls on our leader's private member's motion tomorrow?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's interesting. I know that over the last couple of days, this topic has come up a number of times. What confuses, I think, not only me, but I would argue it confuses most people across the province of Ontario, as it relates to where the Leader of the Opposition stands on this particular issue—I'm looking at a quote from Patrick Brown, from the Leader of the Opposition, from the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce just a few months ago, July 25 of this year. Here's the quote: "I don't think it's appropriate for the province to come in and say 'we know best,' when frankly it should be the local issues that have the best sense of where the gridlock exists."

Just a day later in the Hamilton Spectator, another quote from the Leader of the Opposition: "I respect the autonomy of municipalities. If the mayor and council have stated very clearly that's where they want the provincial partnership to be, that's where it will be."

This morning on CBC's Metro Morning, that leader said, "What I have said on road tolls is not that I'm against them completely."

Will the real Patrick Brown—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: The members for Durham region, York region, Brampton, Mississauga, Oakville, Scarborough, Etobicoke and Waterloo region need to stand up for their constituents. They need to vote for their constituents, constituents who want no part in highway tolls.

Now, Speaker, something tells me they will be forced to vote the way the Premier's office tells them. They need to decide if they're with their constituents or Premier Kathleen Wynne.

I'll ask again: Will the Liberal members be allowed to stand up and vote with their constituents and against road tolls?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the follow-up question.

Here's another quote from the Durham chamber of commerce—Durham, in the 905, on August 29, 2016, from the Leader of the Opposition: "We have to reflect what the top priorities are in each community by looking at what the council is saying. And if there's a resolution of council saying that this is the top priority, then governments should try to work with our municipal partners to respect the municipal wishes."

I think there's additional confusion, because the only party that has ever come forward with a plan to toll in this province, at the provincial level, broadly speaking, has been the Conservative Party with the 407. Then, not more than a year or two later, they sold the 407. They killed the Eglinton subway. They didn't just kill the Eglinton subway, Speaker; they killed it and they filled it. Both of those transportation decisions continue to haunt the people of this region and the people of this province.

We will not go back to those days. We're building the province up, and we're moving forward.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la premi  re ministre.

I have a question on behalf of the Premier's own constituents. Aidan Wellsman is just 16. He was going blind and he desperately needed surgery, but his family was "shocked and appalled" to learn that OHIP wouldn't pay for the surgery to save Aidan's sight. His parents were forced to choose between thousands of dollars out of pocket or to let their son, their child, go blind. It was an absolute nightmare.

No parent in this province should be let down so badly by their own government. How can the Premier say that she believes in medicare, where care is based on need and not on ability to pay, and at the same time refuse to cover Aidan's surgery, a surgery that is covered by many other provinces?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My heart goes out to the family, to this young man and to his parents. I know that the Minister of Health will speak to the specifics of the way decisions are made around these very, very difficult

issues. But what I will say is that it is extremely important in a health care system as large as ours that we have evidence-based decision-making, that we have a system that relies on the expert evidence, and that those decisions are made in as objective a way as possible, based on the evidence. That is paramount in a system as large as we have in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health will speak to that decision-making process in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I believe in decisions made based on evidence—no problem about that. But exactly how much effort is the Premier putting in developing the body of evidence that would allow us to make that decision? It has been five long years that Ontario has been studying these procedures. Every other province has concluded their body of evidence and supported the surgery, but we are still reviewing.

Meanwhile, Aidan Wellsman deserves a bright future. In his time of need, this province said that he would have to go blind first before he could get any help from this government. This is senseless and, frankly, this is mean. Families like Aidan's face the worst dilemma of them all: Let your child go blind or pay for a surgery that you can't afford. Remember, Premier, with medicare, care is based on need, not on ability to pay. Why is this government putting the future of kids like Aidan at risk by refusing to cover the surgery?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, our decisions are based on need but they're also based on evidence and science and expert advice. The Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee, or OHTAC—because we took the politics out of the decision-making for these types of procedures—recommended, for corneal cross-link surgery, that it be made available in a limited fashion because they determined that more evidence was needed to establish corneal cross-linking surgery as an appropriate alternative treatment pathway for patients with certain medical conditions.

Notwithstanding that decision by the technical advisory committee, we made corneal cross-link surgery available through Kensington on a conditional funding program, not through OHIP, because the science wasn't there. But we've made it available. We've quadrupled the funding for it. We anticipate having the results of that pilot available in the next few months, and we'll make an evidence- and science-based decision based on the results of that report.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. I know that the members of my community rely on transport each and every day. Whether they are a student who commutes from Barrie to York University, a parent who works in downtown Toronto—

or a senior who can now visit their grandchildren in Toronto—they need a reliable way to get from Barrie to school or work and back home again.

When members of my community first heard about our government's 10-year GO regional express plan, an investment of \$13.5 billion, they were absolutely thrilled. That is because they knew that this investment would have a meaningful impact on their everyday lives and the way in which they move around the region. Ever since that announcement, I hear often from constituents who are eager to know when they can expect increased service along the Barrie line.

Can the minister please tell us when the residents of Barrie will see service improvements as part of our government's GO RER plan?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Barrie for her question today and also for welcoming me to her community just a couple of days ago, where we made a very important announcement, an announcement I know she has been advocating for some time.

Starting December 31, this New Year's Eve, we are introducing new, all-year-round weekend and holiday GO service to Barrie. This important service will include three trips from Allandale GO station in Barrie to Union Station in the morning and three back in the evening for customers travelling between Toronto back home to Barrie.

Speaker, this is an extremely important step. It's an important demonstration of meaningful progress with respect to delivering two-way, all-day GO service on the Barrie corridor. It means, for the first time ever, year-round, on weekends and holidays, that the people of Barrie will be able to get downtown to see a sports game, have dinner, see a show and be able to get back home safely in the evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

I was very pleased to have the minister in Barrie on Monday for such an important announcement. I've already heard from residents who plan to take full advantage of the new weekend and holiday service. While I know that this investment means a great deal to GO train riders in my riding, it also means the world to our local businesses. For them, increased weekend and holiday service means new people from across the GTA coming to Barrie to experience all that my city has to offer.

For instance, this opens the door for more people to come to Barrie to attend classic events like Kempenfest, an arts and crafts festival that also features great food and entertainment. Torontonians would also enjoy the wonderful productions of Talk Is Free Theatre. If it's too hot in Toronto in the summer, families are now able to ride the GO to the beautiful, sandy Centennial Beach, which is right across from the GO station.

Will the minister please provide members of this House with information on the service announcement he made yesterday at the site of the future Downsview GO station?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Barrie for the follow-up question.

In addition to the announcement we made on Monday in Barrie, I was pleased yesterday to join the member from Newmarket–Aurora—the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for poverty reduction—and our member from York Centre, Speaker, to announce that, also starting this December 31, this New Year's Eve, we will be introducing weekend and holiday year-round GO train service throughout the day, with trains running at 75-minute intervals or better between Union Station and Aurora station. These service improvements are yet another example of our plan at work.

I think it's important to stress—and I can see nodding heads right around this chamber, members of every caucus supporting the fact that we're delivering more. I would simply say that I call on opposition parties to join with us to support budgets, to support the investments we're making in critical transit infrastructure so that we can make sure that communities along the Barrie corridor in York region, Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and right across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area have the transit network they need.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. A group of constituents from the riding of Peterborough, including Mayor Gerow and council members from the township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, are here today calling on the government to invest in much-needed long-term-care beds.

Since 2009, the township has been campaigning for a long-term-care home in the community, and they have partnered with AON Inc. to build it. They presented their application for a 128-bed facility in 2011, but the ministry eventually responded by saying that they are not issuing any new licences for new long-term-care homes.

In Peterborough area, there is currently a wait-list of over 2,700 people in need of long-term care—the longest wait-list for long-term-care beds in the whole province. Here we have a well-prepared plan ready to go, yet the government has done nothing.

Will the Premier commit to overturning her government's decision on this application and tell the good people from the township gathered outside that they will be getting the long-term-care beds that they so desperately need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question because it gives me the opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the MPP from Peterborough. He and I have been discussing this issue intensively.

It's unfortunate that it took individuals coming to Toronto for you to actually raise this for the first time.

The MPP from Peterborough and I have been working diligently on this issue. We had a meeting recently specifically on the Havelock proposal. I directed my office

to become directly involved, and they are. My office has spoken with the mayor. My office has spoken with the chief administrative officer as well. We're looking and working to see if we can find a solution—a solution that I believe meets the community's needs but also understands that there are a variety of mechanisms in place that can address this need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: That was a little bit below the belt. The member has been working on this for a very long time, and you know that.

Back to the Premier: Ontarians are very weary of her government. Everything it touches ends up in scandal, waste, a mistake or a broken promise from you, Premier. Your government wasted \$8 billion on a flawed e-health system, while 24,000 frail seniors continue to go without access to a nursing bed. This is unacceptable, Speaker.

I've been trying valiantly to get this government to show us their capacity plan and say where they will build the promised new long-term-care beds. Considering the Premier does not intend to put the needed beds in Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, will you admit that there never was a capacity plan for new beds, and that your government has no plan to house the frail seniors on the wait-list?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard over the past years to the point where we have roughly doubled our investments in long-term care. We've built, since coming into office, 10,000 long-term-care beds. We're in the middle of a process now where we're redeveloping an additional 30,000 long-term-care beds. We are adding staff to our long-term-care facilities, including, importantly, that we added to that investment this year with new dollars for behavioural supports, because we recognize that the acuity is becoming more challenging. There are more individuals in our long-term-care homes with Alzheimer's and forms of dementia.

We are making those important investments. We're adding the staff. In fact, we have added 1,200 nursing positions in our long-term-care homes since 2008. There's more work to be done, of course, as we see we have both a growing population and an aging population, but that's work that we're undertaking, including capacity planning.

1140

LABOUR DISPUTE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Workers at Peel region children's aid society have been on strike since September—not about wages, but about workload. Yesterday, the workers voted on the employer's last offer and they rejected it with 93% of the vote. Now, the workers want to get back to bargaining. They've looked to the minister and they've received nothing.

Premier, with the vulnerable kids and families in Peel desperate for help and the workers wanting to get back to work, where has your government been?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I thank the member for the question. I just want to take an opportunity to thank the men and women from the children's aid society joining us here in the Legislature today. I recognize that they are hard workers and they are working evenings in many cases to protect our children. I just want to say, on behalf of the government, thank you for the work that you do.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are efforts that are under way. We need to make sure that process is followed. I'm optimistic that the union and the employer are going to be able to find a resolution in the end, and I believe that we've put in place the proper oversight to ensure that the services are continuing to be offered. We've made sure that we monitor the society on a daily basis, and we're confirming that the mandated services are being delivered and that the contingency plan is being followed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Premier: Families and children don't want to be thanked; they want to see this issue resolved. That's why, weeks ago, CUPE proposed a compromise: End the strike and let everyone get back to work by sending the few outstanding issues to binding arbitration. But the employer refused. CAS management wanted to force a vote, and now they have a result, but it's still unresolved.

Speaker, why did the Premier let caseloads soar, morale sink and the work stoppage drag on, affecting the most vulnerable kids and families in Peel?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question.

Speaker, last night a vote was held. CUPE was able to vote. The CUPE members took part in a vote. I think they clearly expressed their will in that regard. We certainly respect that.

I know this morning, the parties have been in touch with my ministry. I've assigned my senior arbitrator to the case. I think that both parties, as a result of the vote last night, are taking a look at this through fresh eyes.

At the Ministry of Labour, what we want to ensure is that in the vast majority of cases in the province of Ontario—98% of collective agreements are put in place with no strike, with no resort to a lockout. In this case that hasn't happened.

We think that the parties can come to an agreement. We're prepared to work with them this morning. They both have been in touch with my ministry. We're prepared to support that resolution because we need these workers back on the job.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Many of us will remember how gasoline prices soared a few years ago. We were paying up to \$1.30 a litre to fill our tanks. But gas prices in Ontario

have fallen sharply in recent years. Regular operation of the market has ensured that these savings are being passed on to consumers.

At the same time, many families have expressed concern over the fluctuating cost of gasoline. Prices sometimes spike unexpectedly and often have great variation from one area to the next, without any obvious explanation to consumers.

The minister recently announced that he's seeking a review of the transportation fuels market to provide greater insight for Ontario drivers. Speaker, could the minister please tell this House how this review is going to provide consumers with more transparency of the fuels market?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the hard-working member for Kitchener Centre for that question.

Families in Ontario are concerned about the prices they face at the pump, particularly in northern Ontario. They have asked for more information on just how these gasoline and diesel prices are set.

I've heard these concerns and so I asked the Ontario Energy Board to conduct a thorough review of the Ontario fuels market. Transparency will be the cornerstone of this report.

In the coming months, the Ontario Energy Board will consult with key stakeholders and reveal three items. First, they will explore the causes of price variations across the province. Second, they will identify how the Ontario market compares with other jurisdictions. Finally, they will examine what information is made available to consumers about pricing and price variation. The Ministry of Energy plans to use this report to identify gaps in information about the fuel market and, as a result, better serve customers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer and let him know that we miss him here in the backseat.

We know that there are a number of factors that go into retail gas prices in Ontario. You've got crude oil costs, taxes, and the retail margin. These are all components of the price that consumers pay at the pumps.

Historically, our province's gasoline market has fared very well. Ontario cities often have the lowest gas prices in all of Canada. A detailed report of the gasoline market will certainly help consumers identify these price components and understand how Ontario compares to the rest of the country.

The minister referred to stakeholders being consulted as part of this retail process. Could he please identify some of the stakeholders whom he's going to be consulting in this upcoming review?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, I want to thank the member for the question, and for the supplementary as well.

As the member indicated, our ministry is listening carefully to the stakeholders most affected by varying fuel prices. In addition to consulting with the general public, the OEB will start conversations with the retail

transportation fuels industry, the federal Competition Bureau and other external experts on this issue.

The ministry is also in the midst of consultations on the next long-term energy plan. The review will be complementary with this planning process, contributing to a greater understanding and a path forward to the transportation fuel sector.

When I was at the federal level, I was a vocal advocate on the topic of gasoline prices in Ontario. Now, as minister, I am pleased to be part of a plan which will bring more transparency for Ontarians on this important issue.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This morning we witnessed another example of how this government uses studies and committees to delay and ration health care. We've heard about Aidan, a healthy young high schooler who has degenerative eye disease, and, if left untreated, he'll go legally blind. When Aidan's parents met with ophthalmologists to review his options, they were told that there was hope. There is a surgery that is available that can save Aidan's eyesight, but OHIP doesn't cover it.

Other provinces have studied the scientific evidence backing this procedure and are covering it. Why is the minister using more precious health care dollars to study it further when that money could actually go to the procedure and give this child his eyesight? Will the minister act and give this child the procedure?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's because we're following the advice of the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee. We didn't make a political decision. I didn't make a decision on whether or not to fund this. We followed the advice of our scientific and clinical evidence-based experts, who told us that we should, on a pilot basis, an experimental basis, fund in a limited fashion this procedure, which is one of a number of options that are available for individuals with particular medical conditions.

So on that basis, following the direction of the advisory committee, which I would hope that members of this Legislature would agree is an appropriate approach to take for corneal cross-link surgery and, quite frankly, anything we do in health care—but on that basis, we funded a conditional, limited pilot program specifically for patients with progressive corneal thinning disorders. We funded that through the Kensington eye clinic. We continue to fund that. We've quadrupled the funding, and we're close to seeing the results of that pilot.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: I don't think there's any common sense left in this government. Every other province has looked at this procedure, researched the scientific evidence and said, "It's a bonus. Let's do it. Let's fund it." But this government wants the tail wagging the dog.

1150

The bureaucracy they keep developing and growing, as we see with Bill 41 today, is hurting patients across

this province. It's time for a change, Mr. Speaker. Due to this government's waste and mismanagement, health care in this province is becoming so rationed that for kids like Aidan—and another one, Balin, who has the same problem—their health outcomes rely solely on the generosity of others.

Speaker, the province has been studying this issue since 2011. How many years does it take to realize this treatment is critical for suffering families? When will the minister act? When will the minister listen to other provinces across this country, fund the treatment and give kids their eyesight?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I believe that Ontario patients are best served when we make our decisions based on science and based on evidence, when we follow the explicit direction of a technical, scientific, clinical expert committee that has guided us in this particular procedure, which is one of a number of procedures that are available.

I know that the member opposite would like to fund anything that comes before him. We have a process. We've taken the politics out of the process. It's clear to me that that party would bring the politics back in, and instead of allowing clinicians, scientists, experts and technical committees established to make these difficult decisions—instead of allowing that process to take place, it's clear that the member opposite and his party would make these decisions based on politics alone.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Last month, a regulation was quietly introduced that will change how much unpaid leave is available to workers in this province.

It's interesting: The change only impacts one small part of one sector, the non-unionized auto sector. The change affects the amount of unpaid personal leave a non-union worker can take, and it limits bereavement leave for these workers to three days.

The very next week, the Premier was off to a trade mission in Japan and Korea where she met with auto industry executives.

My question: Why was this change made, why was it made in this way, so quietly, and why now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Growth is going to want to comment on this, but I will just say that the mission that I led to Korea and to Japan was largely to meet with companies in the auto sector, companies that are investing in Ontario, companies that are expanding their footprint in Ontario, creating jobs and really fuelling part of that economic growth that we are seeing in Ontario that is leading the way in the country. It was a very worthwhile mission. It was very worthwhile to enhance those partnerships.

I will just say, in general, that we are working to find ways to help businesses, to remove regulatory burden where it is getting in the way of businesses, and at the same time make sure that workers are kept safe and that they have decent working conditions. That balance is what we strive for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cindy Forster: How progressive is actually supporting recessionary issues like this for workers in this province?

You know, it's funny. This government has been asked whether it will commit to making progressive changes that New Democrats have called for, like a \$15 minimum wage and making it easier to join and stay in a union, and the answer has been, "We can't commit now. The Changing Workplaces Review is under way."

I can tell you that the Changing Workplaces Review authors have been clear: Employers didn't engage in the review process. Not an auto manufacturer made a submission on changing unpaid leave or bereavement leave for workers. It isn't even anywhere near close to the top of the list.

So why was this change made, Speaker? And when faced with doing the right thing for hard-working Ontarians or what's best for the powerful friends of the Liberal Party, why does this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Ms. Cindy Forster: So when the government has a choice of whether to actually choose workers or choose their powerful friends, why does the government continue to choose their friends over the people and the workers in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The Changing Workplaces Review now has been under way for some time. We've had engagement from labour, we've had engagement from advocates and we've had engagement now from the business community. Everybody is bringing their best to the table. They're bringing their best ideas. When you look at personal emergency leave in the province of Ontario, it's been around for some time. It's used by employees the way that it should be used.

What was suggested was that we might want to do a pilot project; we might want to see if we can bring in personal emergency leave that works in a different way but provides the same services to those people that are employed in that industry. We made this decision based on good advice. We asked the advisers to bring forward their recommendations. We asked if they'd bring it forward first. And I would outline, and I want to be very, very clear that this is a pilot project to see if it works in this particular industry.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We all know that it's important to

have solutions across the housing spectrum to ensure that every person has an affordable home.

Very recently I had the opportunity to participate in a groundbreaking event at the Village by Main Station in my riding of Beaches–East York, where I was pleased to learn about the great work that the non-profit housing developer Options for Homes is doing to make home ownership a reality for low-income residents. Since 1994, Options for Homes has helped thousands of low-income people and families obtain home ownership. In Beaches–East York, at this particular development, we're building 275 low-income units where people are stepping up and buying them for their families. I'm very, very proud to be part of this.

Will the minister please explain to our House how the government is helping low-income families purchase a home?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York for that question and for his festive tie. The member is correct. Providing access to affordable home ownership for low-income families is an important part of Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

Speaker, today the governments of Canada and Ontario announced \$865,000 in funding for Options for Homes through the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program. That program improves access to affordable housing for households across Ontario. We've invested over \$1.6 billion—that's \$1.6 billion—in the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program. The program gives service managers the flexibility to choose what components to fund in their own communities because we understand they know best.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister. I'm so glad to hear that our government is making these investments in affordable housing. I know that my constituents in Beaches–East York who have purchased these units very much appreciate the hard work the minister is doing to bring affordable housing in Ontario. This funding does help strengthen the economy, and it will improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

I've heard from so many of my constituents and others across the province that we have a need to create inclusive communities with a range of housing options. That's why I was so pleased to see that our government passed Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, yesterday afternoon in the House.

Bill 7, as you know, will allow municipalities like the city of Toronto to use inclusionary zoning as a tool to create more affordable housing. Can the minister explain to the House how Bill 7 will help create even more affordable housing across Ontario?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thanks again to the member from Beaches–East York for that question and an opportunity to talk a little bit about Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, which is a landmark piece of legislation. It's going to help increase housing access and affordability for all Ontarians.

One of the new tools now available to municipalities is inclusionary zoning. Bill 7 gives municipalities the option to require affordable housing units to be included in residential developments. This would enable the private sector to play a much larger role in providing affordable housing.

Speaker, before I end, I just wanted to recognize the work of the member from Parkdale–High Park, for her advocacy on inclusionary zoning. She brought forward a number of bills.

Inclusionary zoning is just one of the many tools that the province is moving forward with to increase the supply of affordable housing.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Fedeli assumes ballot item number 37 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item number 42.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a point of order from the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would just love to welcome two members of my constituency office staff: Neil Wereley and Adam Waugh. Welcome. We're delighted to have you here.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today, Kelly Kempel, the principal of my son's school, Southwood Secondary School.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, I have in my possession the final report on the August 14, 2003, blackout, printed in 2004. I'd love to give a copy to the Minister of Energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, when I stand, you sit.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure you are. Also, that's not a point of order.

DEFERRED VOTES

PATIENTS FIRST ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX PATIENTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant diverses lois dans l'intérêt des soins axés sur les patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Earlier today, Mr. Hoskins moved third reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Oosterhoff, Sam
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	McDonnell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr. Michael Harris: It's with much appreciation that I thank the Greater Essex County District School Board for their lengthy fight, now victorious, to be allowed to tender projects fairly and openly.

Since 2001, the board has fought for their right to the highest-quality work at the best possible price after being

certified as a construction employer. A school board is clearly not a construction company, and yet certification has meant closed tendering, which restricts bidding while limiting competition.

After three attempts by the school board to prove it met the definition of a non-construction employer, a recent labour board decision finally means the school board's construction projects are open to all qualified contractors. Area contractors, head over to the board website and start bidding, as Greater Essex is open for business.

While we thank the board for their perseverance and persistence, their struggle for fairness only further highlights the flawed legislative loophole that allows school boards and municipalities to be certified in the first place. Since the Liberal government rejected my Fair and Open Tendering Act, the impacts of closed tendering continue to drive down competition in Hamilton, Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie and my region of Waterloo, while driving up costs for local infrastructure.

That's why I'm here today to not only thank the Greater Essex County District School Board but also to build on their efforts. I remain dedicated to restoring fair tendering for our public sector institutions, and I look forward to taking further legislative steps that will make it clear that rules for construction companies should not apply to municipalities and school boards.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Over the past few weeks, two independent officers of the Legislature, the Auditor General and the Environmental Commissioner, have reported on the Liberals' climate change action plan.

Neither support the claim that the government's plan, as written, will allow Ontario to meet its 2020 target to protect us from dangerous climate change, and that's a big deal. We are approaching substantial climate tipping points that could put us at much greater peril. This is not a time to be playing games.

Both the Auditor General and the Environmental Commissioner have serious questions about the viability and credibility of a number of the major programs that the Liberal climate plan claims will allow them to meet their targets by 2020. It appears that the Liberal government is planning to paper over the gap between the story they tell and the reality by allowing the purchase of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of cheap carbon allowances from California and then saying that the job is done. That strategy is irresponsible. It drains money from Ontario, and, frankly, could discredit climate action in this province.

I call on the Liberals to change their climate plans, to focus on real emissions cuts in Ontario and focus on protecting this province from dangerous climate change.

POVERTY REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to speak about the recent basic income pilot consultation in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. In the 2016 budget, the government

made a commitment to further address poverty in Ontario by committing to piloting a basic income for Ontarians. We are looking to test the view that a basic income could be a better way to deliver income supports while improving health, housing and employment outcomes for Ontarians.

The idea of a basic income is generating immense interest both here in Canada and around the world. The Minister of Community and Social Services, in partnership with the minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy, has begun consultation across Ontario to get feedback from people with lived experience, municipalities, experts and academics.

The consultation, held in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt last Tuesday, was the second consultation of 14 to be held. Seventy-eight people participated in this consultation, and, to date, basic income has received the most feedback ever seen during a consultation on Ontario.ca. Over 20,000 responses have been received on the survey online alone.

I want to thank Minister Jaczek and Minister Ballard for their leadership in implementing a new approach to improving income security.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of Lee Soda, her staff at Agincourt Community Services Association and their clients for participating in last week's consultation.

I believe, through working with organizations like the Agincourt Community Services Association and also looking into innovative approaches in delivering supports, that we can improve the lives of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further members' statements.

FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you and good afternoon, Speaker. Communities in my riding are seeking confirmation from the government on the continued stability of the provincial tax credit for the film and television industry in Ontario. You may remember, in the 2014 budget, that the government planned to change the tax credit, but on this side of the chamber, we fought hard to keep it in place.

We worked with industry and won that battle and, as a result, the film industry has reaped benefits across the province, particularly at home, in the north. For example, just last week, a new production announced that it would be coming to North Bay.

This continued success is what prompted the municipalities of East Ferris and North Bay to each pass resolutions highlighting their concerns. Given their uncertainty in the government's commitment to the film and television industry, these municipalities resolved that the government of Ontario and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport make a public commitment to the stability of the provincial tax credit system and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund to ensure continued foreign and domestic investment in northern production, along with increased work opportunities for northern Ontario residents of all ages and backgrounds.

It is important that the government reaffirm confidence in the film and television industry and support continued growth in this sector.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. John Vanthof: Since this is my last member's statement before the House rises, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone, both here and at home, a merry Christmas.

But even more importantly, I'd like, in advance, to thank all of those people who, while we are enjoying ourselves over the holidays, work hard to keep us happy, healthy and safe: all the people in the health care industry—not only in health care, but even in corrections, and all of the people you don't think about, the people who work not only during the holidays, who work every day, but specifically during the holidays.

Coming from an agricultural background, I would like to take this time to thank the farmers of Ontario, specifically the livestock farmers who, on Christmas Day, will be feeding, will be milking, will be doing all the things it takes to keep animals happy and healthy.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to thank everyone who is on call on Christmas Day, be it a plumber, be it an electrician, be it a veterinarian—anyone who is on call. I know in my business, I have had the vet pulling a calf on Christmas Day a few times. It's jolly, I can tell you, but there are places that they would rather be.

It's a great time of year, but we are protected by so many people in the province, and I'm happy to be able to recognize that.

GLOBALMEDIC

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I am privileged to welcome GlobalMedic to Queen's Park today. GlobalMedic is a non-partisan registered Canadian charity that runs capacity-building programs in post-conflict nations and provides disaster relief services to large-scale catastrophes both internationally and domestically. Their priority is to save lives by providing short-term rapid response in the wake of disasters and crises, both at home and abroad.

GlobalMedic came to Queen's Park today to package "welcome to Canada" kits. These kits contain essential household and hygiene items that will be hand-delivered to families who have fled the violence in Syria and have newly arrived in Canada.

The kits are to be packed by all of us here. I invite everyone to participate in room 230 any time during the day and spend some time to support this cause. This is a hands-on opportunity for all of us to support the newly arrived Syrian families and welcome them to our great province.

WESTSIDE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to share with you a good-news story from Westside Secondary School in Orangeville. Last month, I visited Westside as they held their

12th annual Think Pink fundraiser for the Breast Cancer Society of Canada's Dress for the Cause.

Westside began holding Pink Day fundraisers in 2004 after several staff members were diagnosed with cancer. For the last number of years, Westside has been recognized as the top school fundraiser in all of Canada.

1510

This year was a special celebration because it marked their great accomplishment of raising over \$100,000 since 2004. The students of Westside were packed into the gym and everyone wore a lot of pink to show their support. Brave students and staff raised hundreds of dollars by offering to shave their heads or cut their hair. Some young men were even brave enough to have their legs waxed in public.

It was a great afternoon as we cheered on students and staff who battled it out in a tug-of-war. But the biggest cheer of all was when we heard that Westside had raised an incredible \$20,000 this year.

Sometimes young people get accused of only caring about their Instagram accounts or their weekends. Westside Secondary School proved them wrong.

Congratulations to Principal Wilson, the staff and students of Westside for their fantastic work. Well done.

ST. ANDREW'S SOCIETY OF KINGSTON

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: What a thrill it was to once again join the St. Andrew's Society of Kingston as they celebrated 176 years during their annual dinner on November 20. Guests were served a traditional Scottish feast, which was not complete without a wee haggis, and many were dressed in kilts and other customary Scottish attire. As always, it was a festive gathering, with engaging conversation and excellent company.

Kingston welcomed an influx of Scottish immigrants—including my mother—seeking better opportunities in Canada following the Industrial Revolution. Founded in 1840, the St. Andrew's Society began as a charitable organization to welcome Scottish newcomers and their descendants as they transitioned to life in Kingston. The society continues to play an important role in supporting newcomers to Kingston, fostering a strong sense of community.

St. Andrew's Society has been enriched by some famous and influential characters, including Sir John A. Macdonald, our first Prime Minister. I have no doubt that our current members, like John and, of course, the legendary Isabel Turner—who instills the fear of God into you if you can't attend a dinner—the Rutherfords, and so many other families will likewise be remembered for their outstanding contributions to the society.

Congratulations once again to the St. Andrew's Society of Kingston for 176 years of Scottish cultural tradition in our city.

INTERNET ACCESS

Mr. Ted Arnott: During my canvass of Wellington-Halton Hills in the 2014 general election, I met thousands

of people. I sought to answer their questions, listen to their concerns, and encourage their aspirations.

One thing I heard is that many of my constituents do not have access to affordable, reliable high-speed Internet. We know that in today's economy, connectivity is an absolute necessity for households, farms and businesses.

When the House resumed immediately following the election to consider again the government's budget, I tabled a resolution urging the government to develop a strategy to ensure that all Ontarians would have access to affordable, reliable high-speed Internet and work with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and the federal government to achieve this goal with public-private partnerships.

Exactly 24 months passed. Then, this past July, the government announced a commitment to doing precisely what we had urged them to do: setting aside \$90 million, with an equal federal government contribution, to support the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology Project, known as SWIFT.

While it sounded good, they didn't announce a time frame for the launch or completion of the new and improved Internet service, nor could they release a list of the 300 communities they claimed would benefit from the program.

We all need to recognize the public interest in getting this done, working together to accomplish interim objectives and prerequisites, and this includes the private sector partners.

I want to express my thanks to everyone involved with implementing this proposal, but let's keep it moving. The county of Wellington and the town of Halton Hills are very enthusiastic about expanding access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet. Let's get behind our local communities, and let's build a fibre network throughout rural Ontario that gives every Ontarian access to high-speed, affordable, reliable Internet service and all the benefits that technology entails.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: the member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to welcome the hard-working Rahul Singh, who is the executive director of GlobalMedic. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was just about to do that, so I appreciate it. I have known Rahul for quite some time, after his Order of Ontario that he received. Congratulations on that.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Munro assumes ballot item number 34 and Mr. Harris assumes ballot item number 69.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr54, An Act to revive Computers Mean Business Inc.

Bill Pr55, An Act to revive Ranger Survey Systems Canada Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. Carried.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 70, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 30, 2016, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'AIDE MÉDICALE À MOURIR

Mr. Hoskins moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to medical assistance in dying / Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'aide médicale à mourir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This bill amends various acts in response to the federal Criminal Code legislation dealing with medical assistance in dying. This act amends the Coroners Act, the Excellent Care for All Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. These amendments would provide more clarity on medical assistance in dying for patients, families and health care providers.

PROTECTING PASSENGER SAFETY
ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION
DE LA SÉCURITÉ DES PASSAGERS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization /
Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'augmenter la pénalité prévue à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis de conduire, certificat d'immatriculation ou autorisation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John Fraser: This is a reintroduction of a bill that I introduced previously. What it essentially does is it increases the penalties for not having authorized transportation of a passenger for compensation. It gives the regulator, generally the municipalities, more power to ensure passenger safety.

1520

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES OFFICES DE PROTECTION
DE LA NATURE

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to amend the Conservation Authorities Act /
Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement

Ms. Cindy Forster: The bill amends the Conservation Authorities Act to require that at least half the members of a conservation authority have significant training, experience or employment history in an environmental or natural resource field. The bill also requires that all existing appointments be terminated and allows those members whose appointments are terminated in this

manner to be reappointed if they meet the new qualifications.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

COMPUTER SCIENCE
EDUCATION WEEK

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I am pleased to rise in the House today. As some of my colleagues may know, this is Computer Science Education Week. Today, I am delighted to stand in the House to highlight how our government is supporting teachers and our students around coding and computational thinking, a resource that further highlights Ontario's successful and innovative approach to education.

On Monday, I had the opportunity to meet with staff, teachers and students at Ranchdale Public School in North York, the kick-off of Computer Science Education Week and an Hour of Code. It is always a pleasure to visit students, teachers and staff across this wonderful province, and of course, it's always a great opportunity as the Minister of Education to see first-hand how our young people are learning in action as they learn and are engaged.

I think we can agree that this is an exciting time for education and, of course, technology. We know that jurisdictions around the world are exploring how to best prepare their students for the knowledge-based, innovative economy of today and tomorrow. We live in a world that is growing ever more complex. We depend so heavily on technology to communicate, to gather information, to buy and sell goods, to manage our personal finances and to demonstrate global citizenship. As our students move on in their careers, in health care, entertainment, education, manufacturing, finance, or other pathways—many of which have not yet been created—technology will play an even greater role in our lives and in our future.

Now, more than ever, understanding technologies and developing digital literacy computational thinking skills is not only essential to our students' academic success; it's essential for preparing Ontario for a more prosperous future. As part of Computer Science Education Week, a number of school boards and schools are participating in the Hour of Code, a movement reaching over 180 countries across the globe. In fact, children and adults alike are being encouraged to take part in one-hour coding tutorials in over 45 different languages. That's one of the reasons I believe that Hour of Code is such an inspiring program.

Hour of Code started as a one-hour introduction to computer science designed to demystify computer coding. Its purpose was to demonstrate that anybody can learn the basics and to broaden participation in the field of computer science. Today, this program is now a

world-wide effort that celebrates computer science and computational thinking.

We're encouraging school boards to participate in the Hour of Code to celebrate computational thinking, including coding, currently happening across many Ontario schools. For example, in kindergarten, students use computational thinking when they navigate a mouse through a maze, demonstrating an awareness of their surroundings. In grade 3, students use computational thinking skills in mathematics to create an obstacle course using a variety of coding programs. In grade 7, students use the creative process to design artwork to animate a character through points on a Cartesian plane.

In the Upper Grand District School Board, students had the opportunity to program Dash, a toy robot that makes coding more accessible for students, to navigate through a maze they designed themselves.

High school students can choose to specialize, taking specific courses through school to prepare them for employment, college, university and work pathways that rely on these important skills. It's truly inspiring, refreshing and exciting to see what students in our schools are up to.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to visit Ranchdale Public School in North York. I was welcomed by the school principal, Sarah Nauman, who gave me a tour of their wonderful school. I had the pleasure of taking part in the Hour of Code with Ms. Beattie's grade 4/5 split class, where one of the students, named Maya, showed me how she learned to use coding on an iPad in order to activate one of the toy robots. Not only did Maya show me how to operate this particular robot when I got to try coding for the first time, but she also successfully spent numerous hours building this toy robot with her team before learning to use code to generate the robot's movement and sound.

I thoroughly enjoyed watching Maya and her classmates then organize themselves into teams and apply the skills each student learned through coding and compete against each other with the robots that they had built and programmed. I truly hope more students from across the province will have an opportunity to participate in the Hour of Code this week, just like Ranchdale Public School did, because when students enhance their skills in digital literacy, they are not only increasing their exposure to technology, they're also building important problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that will help them later on in their lives.

As Bonnie Schmidt, president of Let's Talk Science, recently said, "New citizenship and work requires creative, critical thinkers who can thrive in an increasingly complex, technology-driven world." And our government is committed to preparing our students for this changing world.

As part of Ontario's renewed vision for education, schools and school boards have been engaging students in developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will support them in their futures.

Through the Technology and Learning Fund, which we launched in 2014, we committed to investing \$150

million over three years. The purpose of this fund is to promote innovation and transformation in teaching and learning by using technology.

But while we have already seen the positive effects of this fund, we know there is more work to do. That's why I'm so pleased to note that, earlier this week, our government announced that the Ministry of Education is launching a new professional resource on coding for elementary educators. This new resource will have lesson plans and other teaching tools that illustrate how to integrate coding and various computational thinking skills into their classroom practice—with or without technology. This resource will include a variety of software and app recommendations that educators can use to encourage students to develop computational thinking skills that will help them succeed today and in the future.

Computational concepts provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to tackle real-world problems, and this kind of thinking can be applied to subjects across the curriculum, including math and science.

For example, in elementary school, students use technological problem-solving skills in science and technology to create a toy that uses the electrical energy from a battery or solar cell to move across the floor.

In secondary school, students have opportunities to make connections across disciplines by programming circuit boards that control interactive art displays. Even classrooms with limited or no Internet access will be able to implement this new resource. These opportunities need to grow in our secondary schools.

As recommended by the Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, Ontario is expanding experiential learning opportunities for students, including robotics competitions, and working to increase participation in coding and computer programs for students in grades 11 and 12.

1530

Ontario's Specialist High-Skills Major enables students to build a foundation of sector-focused knowledge and skills, including coding and computer systems, before graduating. Through this work, the hope is to not only have a positive impact on student success but to assist Ontario's educators to integrate the skills of computational thinking, including coding, into their teaching.

By 2019, Canada is expected to experience a shortage of approximately 180,000 information, communications and technology workers, further emphasizing the importance of teaching the next generation coding and computational skills. That's why in Ontario we must lead the way. We need to equip students with the skills to thrive in a world where technology is constantly evolving.

Our students are global citizens. They require a wide range of tools and skills in order to adapt. From ongoing developments in technology to our renewed vision for education, we have an opportunity to scale our educational system to even greater heights.

As Kayvon Mihan, president of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, said, "The adaptation of Ontario's education system to a growing technological society ensures that students will not be left behind as the world moves forward."

I'm very proud of our education system. Ontario has one of the best education systems in the world. We must equip our phenomenal educators as they are equipping students with computational skills like coding and other global competencies. We're preparing them to succeed now and in every stage of their lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

Mr. Michael Harris: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this province's direction when it comes to empowering our young people and preparing them for the future, a future that, of course, is here today, embedded in the code that runs our laptops, programs and apps while powering the technological advances that move us ever forward.

Speaker, we've always said that there is no monopoly on a good idea, and we acknowledge the government for listening to the Ontario PC caucus and announcing steps toward new supports for coding and computer skills in our schools here in the province. That said, school participation in the Hour of Code, while a worthy initiative, falls well short of the integration of coding into the curriculum that our students require to prepare them for the information highway ahead.

Rather than just an hour of code, Speaker, we're looking for a year of code: ensuring that coding is a key part of our students' education every year, not just for one hour. While the Hour of Code reaches 180 countries where children and adults can participate in one-hour coding tutorials in more than 45 different languages, many of those countries taking part in the Hour of Code already have coding in their classrooms. Coding is already part of the curriculum in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Poland and Portugal, as well as parts of the United States and China.

Why are so many countries making coding a classroom focus? It's because coding is the key to unlocking our digital world. There is not a website, smartphone app, computer program or even calculator that doesn't rely on code to operate.

For too long, our students have been denied the technological courses and programming required to access post-secondary advanced programs and job opportunities in our future. The unfortunate fact is that while these job opportunities are plentiful and growing by the day, many of them are unable to be filled by Ontario candidates as we're not doing a good enough job in preparing them.

An Information and Communications Technology Council report indicates that Ontario alone will need to fill 76,300 information and communications technology positions over the next five years. If we continue the way we've been going, many of those positions will be filled by those from outside of our province.

In my area of Waterloo region, where we are proud of our role as the true technological leader, that message is brought home every day. Desire2Learn, one of the companies leading the way in educational technology, is just one example of the concerning skills gap that sees D2L forced to get half of its employees from California

because the deep programming knowledge and training that they need is only offered at two Ontario universities.

In the meantime, the annual Canadian Internet Forum recently indicated that a growing skills gap in the information technology sector is shackling Canada's gaming and other tech industries. According to the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario's skills shortages cost the economy up to \$24.3 billion in forgone GDP and \$3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues annually.

I think it's in all our interests to ensure that our young learners are learning the skills that will bridge the divide and realize the potential that we have right here in Ontario. I will note that even before the recent announcement, there have been signals that that message is getting through, even with students just entering their school years.

I recall a recent visit to my son Murphy's J.W. Gerth Room 2 junior kindergarten class, where I was impressed to see Mrs. T and Mrs. Washington—his teachers—encouraging the kids with tablet coding exercises that indicate that our very youngest are getting a head start—at least, of course, in Room 2.

Speaker, it was 60 years ago that the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Bill Davis, stood in this Legislature to indicate, "In this new age of technological change and invention, also, it is essential to the continued growth and expansion of the economy of our province, and of our nation, that adequate facilities be made generally available for the education and training of craftsmen, technicians and technologists.

"The new era is golden with promise, if only we prepare in time for it."

Speaker, then, as now, the new era is golden with promise, and the clock for preparation is ticking. I'm hopeful that this week's tentative steps supporting high-tech education in our schools will only be the first of many to help our young people face the new era with the tools they require to realize that promise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further members' statements?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm getting grumpy.

Further members' responses?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath and all New Democrats to provide a response this afternoon on Computer Science Education Week.

Ontario students are ambitious and eager to learn new skills that they can use throughout their lives. Ontario families benefit from professional and dedicated teachers, educational assistants and many other education workers who go above and beyond to meet student needs each and every day.

I want to congratulate all students who are participating in the Hour of Code this week and thank the parents and education workers who make this possible.

Providing our students greater training in coding and computational thinking allows them to build the skills they need to lead this province in the years to come. Today's students are tomorrow's data scientists, computer programmers, software engineers and so much more. Indeed, many of the job titles our students will hold likely haven't even been invented yet.

That's why we need to ensure that Ontario is at the forefront of integrating new technologies into the classroom and providing all education workers with the tools and resources to provide students with a positive, inclusive learning experience.

This week, Computer Science Education Week, focuses on bringing universal attention to the importance of and opportunities that exist within the field of computer science. Particular importance must be paid to encouraging young women to enter a career that utilizes coding and computational thinking.

Since Ada Lovelace's groundbreaking work on the general-purpose computing machine, women throughout the world have contributed to the advancement of computer sciences. Encouraging women to enter into computer science and all STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and mathematics—is critical to addressing the gender wage gap in Ontario. It's critical to ensuring that these disciplines continue to advance and that Ontario continues to innovate.

Focusing on computer science in Ontario schools will expose students from all walks of life to the benefits and opportunities that an advanced education in computer science can offer.

Speaker, universal access to basic technological resources is critical to ensuring that our next generation of leaders are able to create, embrace and apply new technologies. Unfortunately, too many students in rural and northern Ontario still do not have access to high-speed Internet connections that make early exposure to new technology possible. Access to high-speed, reliable Internet is inconsistent across the province and limits student exposure to the building blocks of new technologies. Equity in access to high-speed, reliable and affordable Internet must be a priority as we move forward.

For years, our publicly funded schools and libraries have tried to provide opportunities for students and families to access the Internet, but often those who built a career in computer science had access to reliable, high-speed Internet and computers in their own homes, not in their schools. Students don't have equitable access to technological supports. Rather than making it easier for families to provide their children with high-speed Internet in areas where it is available, families are continuously forced to cut back in order to provide other basic services like food and electricity.

1540

Yes, on a day when we are talking about encouraging more students to enter into computer science, when we all agree that it's important to expose students to the discipline at a young age, families are struggling to keep

the lights on, let alone pay their monthly Internet bill. The situation is becoming so dire that thousands of Ontario families are accessing supports like food banks. The capital city of this province has even become known as the child poverty capital of Canada. Ontario is truly at a tipping point, and life is getting much more difficult.

At a time when we need to be forward-thinking, when we need to encourage students to pursue an education in computer science, we need to ensure that, in this province, no student or family is forgotten. Inside the classroom, students with special education needs struggle to get the support they deserve, support that allows them to thrive along with their classmates. Our professional and dedicated teachers and educational assistants go above and beyond to ensure that they meet and exceed student needs, but the government must do more to support these workers and students.

Speaker, in order to prepare for the economy of tomorrow, the students and families of today must not be left behind. New Democrats will continue to fight to ensure that our next generation has a real future here. That includes each and every student, regardless of geography or family income.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here that now, literally, amounts to thousands and thousands of names.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario

Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I support this petition, I sign it and send it down with page Anne.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

"The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

"A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

"More the 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and

"Whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

"The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

"79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

"The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

"That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign this and give it to Jackson to be delivered to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas energy costs have skyrocketed as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies of wind and solar projects will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas Ontario's average cost of electricity is highest in Canada; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity and heating fuel is straining family budgets and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately eliminate subsidies for wind and solar, ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable energy."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Henry to take to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Nancy Johnson, who is the chair of the NorthEast Family Council Network and who started this petition. It reads as follows:

"Fair Treatment of the Frail Elderly Seeking Long-Term-Care Placement.

"Whereas frail elderly patients needing long-term-care placement in homes within the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) have been pressured to move out of the hospital to await placement, or stay and pay hospital rates of approximately \$1,000 per day; and

"Whereas frail elderly patients needing long-term-care placement in Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie have been pressured to move to homes not of their choosing, or to 'interim' beds in facilities that don't meet legislated standards for permanent long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas the practice of making patients remain in 'interim' beds is contrary to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) policy which identifies 'interim' beds as intended 'to ensure a continuous flow-through so that interim beds are constantly freed up for new applicants from hospitals;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"—Ensure health system officials are using 'interim' beds as 'flow-through,' in accordance with fairness and as outlined in MOHLTC policy;

"Ensure patients aren't pressured with hospital rates and fulfill promises made to hundreds of nursing home residents who agreed to move temporarily with the promise that they would be relocated as soon as a bed in a home of their choosing became available."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Charlie to bring it to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has before it an application to construct a long-term-care home in the town of Havelock;

“Whereas all other towns in the area have long-term-care facilities;

“Whereas residents of Havelock have to leave their community when they are no longer able to fully look after themselves;

“Whereas this takes residents away from their family and friends;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To act now to complete the long-term-care home that is on the books for the town of Havelock.”

It is signed by hundreds of people from the Havelock area. There was a rally today outside with two busloads, with Mayor Ron Gerow. I'll pass it to page Lauren.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: “Petition to Save Hospital Services in Durham.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hospital mergers deliver little in savings and historically result in a loss of services to smaller communities;

“Whereas Durham region has seen a period of tremendous population growth with no capacity planning for meeting the health care needs of the growing population; and

“Whereas the current Lakeridge Health/Rouge Valley Health System's ordered merger will cost \$18.2 million that will come out of the operating budgets of the hospitals resulting in cuts to services;

1550

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To ensure the provincial government halts the merger of Lakeridge Health and Rouge Valley Health System immediately and creates a comprehensive and clear plan for proper and fully funded services to meet the needs of the residents in the communities of Port Perry, Bowmanville, Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax and Pickering; and

“To ensure that Durham residents have access to needed public hospital services in their respective communities now and in the future.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition and will send it with page David.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have a very serious petition.

“Whereas Ontario has the highest electricity rates in all of North America, and the provincial government has recognized an oversupply now exists at the exorbitant cost to taxpayers;

“Whereas reports of wind farm construction causing source water contamination of the underlying contact aquifer in the former Dover township of Chatham-Kent municipality reported to the Ontario Ministry of Energy in 2012;

“Whereas a proper investigation of the nature of the contamination and the cause of the contamination in the water source under the former Dover township of the Chatham-Kent municipality has not been conducted by the MOECC;

“Whereas a proper subsequent investigation by a qualified toxicologist to determine if a risk to population health exists from the source water contamination under the former Dover township in the municipality of Chatham-Kent has not been conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Health;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately halt construction of the North Kent 1 and Otter Creek wind farms until proper investigations by the MOECC and the Ontario Ministry of Health are completed and proper remediation plans are then put in place to protect source water resources and prevent well interference in the municipality of Chatham-Kent.”

I wholeheartedly appreciate this petition. I sign it and will give it to Giulia.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

“Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

“Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

“Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

“Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

It's my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Emma-Rose.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. James J. Bradley: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently reviewing employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to accomplish the following:

“—ensure that part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time permanent counterparts;

“—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

“—offer fair scheduling with proper advance notice;

“—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

“—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temporary agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

“—end the practice of contract flipping, support wage protection and job security for workers when companies change ownership or contracts expire;

“—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

“—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

“—offer proactive enforcement of the laws through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws;

“—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$15 an hour, regardless of their status as full-time, part-time, casual or temporary workers and regardless of their age, gender, student status or area of work.”

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can’t afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario’s businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General’s report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven’t met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

“Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government’s current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills.”

I agree with this petition and have affixed my signature to it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

Before I get into orders of the day, I’m going to remind members that I have been passed a list. If you were warned this morning, next time it’s hasta la vista. Okay? You know who you are, the ones that were warned this morning.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mr. Naqvi moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Naqvi?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for acknowledging me to speak on Bill 45. I’m very much looking forward to speaking to the bill. It’s entitled the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

With this bill, we wanted to identify real issues with our elections and put forward real solutions. Take voter turnout, for example: It’s a serious and growing problem in our province and has been for generations. In fact, we see that across the country. In our last general election in Ontario, less than 52% of people came out to vote. Until that election, this number had declined in every provincial election since 1990. In 2011, voter turnout dropped below 50%. This is, no doubt, a disturbing trend. Among young people, the numbers are even worse. In the last provincial election, only 34% of eligible youth cast a ballot. With this bill, we hope we will help to improve these numbers. We want to make voting easier and modernize the way we vote. We want people, young and

old, to get excited about voting, because elections matter and every vote really does count.

This is the last of three bills that we have put forward in the past year and a half to reform and renew our democratic processes. Across these bills, our focus has been consistent: We have worked to improve representation, transform how the political process is funded and improve the voting experience. There are some big ideas in all these three bills. When you put them together, they add up to some of the most progressive and positive changes to our province's election rules in a long time.

The first of these bills was the Electoral Boundaries Act. In it, we sought to improve representation by aligning Ontario's southern electoral districts with the federal districts, adding 15 new ridings in the process. These were mostly in areas with denser populations and shifting demographics, such as Toronto, Peel, York, Durham and Ottawa.

1600

We knew that aligning with the federal boundaries would make ridings more representative in the south, but in the north, we were concerned that doing the same thing would have the opposite effect. That's because the federal government actually has fewer ridings in the north, and alignment would have meant reducing the number of ridings from 11 to 10.

To ensure continued, effective representation in the provincial Legislature for northern communities, we decided to maintain Ontario's 11 northern ridings. These changes were passed in the House in December of last year, and the new ridings will be in place for the next scheduled provincial election in 2018.

The next elections bill that we put forward was the Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act. We introduced that bill for the first time in May of this year.

I have had a lot of opportunity to speak on Bill 2 in this House in recent weeks, so I'll spare you all the details today. However, I would like to remind the House of its objectives: to create stronger and clearer rules for election financing, rules that all parties could agree to and abide by. In time, our hope is that we can build the public's trust in our province's election finance system, and confidence that their political representatives are working in their best interests.

That bill was developed through an open and consultative process, with public committee hearings held across the province. It includes some important landmark reforms. For example, the bill eliminates political donations from corporations and unions. It lowers the individual political donation limit by nearly 90%, and bans politicians, party leaders, candidates and senior political staff from attending political fundraising events.

Speaker, this bill was passed just last week, as you may recall, and most of the measures will come into effect on January 1, 2017, just like what is proposed in the bill before you today.

This brings us back to Bill 45, the third of these bills, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill looks to modernize Ontario's elections.

We often use the word "modernization" as shorthand for what is new and cutting-edge—technology, for the most part—but there's a lot more to it than that. Modernization is about finding contemporary solutions to issues and recognizing that what worked in the past might not be the right answer today. While this can involve technology, it can also mean reallocating resources or resetting priorities in a way that better suits the issue at hand, rethinking policies and processes that have stayed the same for years, and challenging ourselves to do things differently.

Earlier, I mentioned the numbers around how low our voter turnout is. We want to modernize by finding new ways to promote enthusiasm in our democracy, and laying the groundwork for better voter outreach, especially to young and future voters.

We also must seek better representation for northern and indigenous communities and acknowledge the unique challenges that they face.

Although this bill puts forward solutions to a broad set of issues, it shares a common goal with these other bills: making our elections work better for everybody in the province.

This kind of transformation is no small task, particularly when it comes to something as important as our electoral system. Fortunately, in our province, we have a designated expert to help us with these matters: the Chief Electoral Officer. Currently, that is Mr. Greg Essensa. As the head of Elections Ontario, it is his job to administer our provincial elections and to offer the province advice in between elections. He is a source of institutional knowledge from year to year, from election to election.

At various points throughout the year, the Chief Electoral Officer will issue recommendations to the government—for example, after general elections and in his annual reports. These recommendations reflect his big-picture perspective, considering both the benefits of innovation and the need to maintain the integrity of our elections. Many of the measures in this bill are taken from recommendations found in his reports over the past three years—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Those reports include the CEO's two most recent annual reports: the report on the 2014 general election and the report on the Whitby–Oshawa by-election earlier this year. The Chief Electoral Officer has been very helpful in the development of these bills, providing his input and advice to committee at every opportunity. As always, I would like to sincerely thank him and the team at Elections Ontario for the important work they do.

In a few minutes, the member from Scarborough Southwest, I believe, will give the House a better sense of the whole range of amendments in this bill. In the meantime, for my part, I'll speak to some of the key pieces, starting with our proposed approach to engage young people.

If passed, this bill would allow young people to take their first step towards democratic participation up to two

years earlier, by allowing 16 and 17 years old to sign up for a provisional register. When a young person enrolled on the register turns 18, the information would be transferred directly to our primary voters register, the permanent register of electors for Ontario. This means that if an election happened to fall on their 18th birthday, they would already be registered and ready to go to vote.

Although eligible voters can still vote if they're not registered, there are a lot of advantages to registering beforehand. Registration lets Elections Ontario get in touch with voters before elections to make sure you know where and when to vote. For example, registered voters get those little voter information cards in the mail, which direct them to the correct polls. This kind of thing can help make things a lot quicker and easier for you on election day.

Statistics confirm the advantage. According to Elections Ontario, people who are registered are more likely to vote than those who are not. It's no surprise, then, that the age bracket with the lowest voter turnout, 18- to 24-year-olds, also had the lowest registration rate. The provisional register could help to change that.

Elections Ontario would have a significant part to play here. First of all, they would be tasked with setting up and maintaining this provisional register. Since they already look after Ontario's official permanent register, they are well situated to take on this additional task. Given their existing infrastructure, I'm confident that we are placing this responsibility in capable hands.

The new provisional register would also allow Elections Ontario to enhance their engagement with young people, through partnerships with high schools, for example. The Chief Electoral Officer has already shown interest in doing more of this, and if this bill passes, I look forward to seeing how this provision rolls out.

This is an exciting proposal, and I think it could have a lasting impact on democratic participation in Ontario. The day we introduced this bill in October, I had the opportunity to talk to a grade 10 class about this exact proposal. I was impressed at how eager those young people were to discuss the issues that matter to them. I know that when I was that age, I learned a lot of lessons that have stuck with me to this day, but also know that talk on its own isn't always enough. This bill would give young people a real, tangible action to go along with this message. Our hope is that, by signing up for the provisional register, youth would be able to take a first step along a lifelong path of participation in the democratic process, and hopefully a lot of them will seek public office at different levels as well.

Another important part of this bill that I wanted to highlight allows for electronic vote tabulators to be used in Ontario elections. That means votes don't need to be counted by hand, which I'm sure is good news to anybody who has been involved in the process before. A lot of us have been scrutineers and have seen how these votes get counted, ballot after ballot.

The benefits also go further than that. The addition of electronic tabulators and voter lists allows Elections

Ontario to run its polling stations far more efficiently. For voters, this could help to save time at the polling station. Apart from that, however, the act of voting will change very little. It will still involve marking an X on the black-and-white paper ballot, and that's very much by design.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Hear, hear.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member from St. Catharines of course approves of that.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Elections Ontario looks carefully at all options available for voting technology and will not recommend a change that would compromise the integrity of the vote. Even the impression that we're moving too fast, that a new technology has made our vote less secure, is harmful to our system. Take online voting, for example, which the Chief Electoral Officer has advised against adopting until the technology progresses further.

1610

For every change, we have to weigh the value of progress with the critical issue of public trust. I think that our proposed changes fall on the right side of this. The technologies we are proposing are straightforward and secure, and voters will continue to use a time-tested voting method that is still widely trusted.

Finally, I would like to address a couple of measures aimed at improving representation in the north, starting with the proposed creation of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, which is part of this bill. The goal here is ensuring that everybody in Ontario has fair and effective representation. When it comes to our northern and indigenous communities, there is definitely work to be done.

In regions where the population is spread out over vast stretches of land, effective representation should be measured by more than just the number of people in a riding. Take Kenora-Rainy River, for example. It's the northernmost riding in our province and, at over 300,000 square kilometres, it's also the largest. Even though it has a relatively low population, there is a vast range of economic, cultural and other interests that are all present at once. Given these factors, ensuring truly effective representation in the north is an enormous challenge.

The proposed commission would be tasked with trying to tackle some of these issues. It would include a current or former Ontario judge, an academic from an Ontario university and two people who identify as indigenous persons, as well as the Chief Electoral Officer. We hope that this mix of expert and community members will help ensure an effective balance of perspectives.

The commission will be asked to consult the public before and after developing its preliminary recommendations. This will provide an opportunity to hear many voices, including those of indigenous people.

Speaker, our government believes that it is very important to specifically include indigenous perspectives, both as a matter of practice and of principle, in the development of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. We believe that the commission should engage all indigenous organizations equally on this important matter.

In addition to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, or NAN, some indigenous communities in these Far North ridings are represented by Treaty 3. Furthermore, there are many independent First Nations, as well as Métis communities and indigenous Ontarians who live in towns or urban centres in these ridings.

We look forward to working closely with all indigenous organizations and leaders as the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission works to improve representation.

Ultimately, the committee would report back to me, as the Attorney General, with recommendations on the creation of either one or two new ridings in the area that currently holds the ridings of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay. With this input, our government would move forward legislative reform, with the goal of having any changes in place by the 2018 general election.

I would also like to tell you, Speaker, about a third party motion that our government was pleased to support at committee and that is included in the bill before you today. It would make a slight adjustment to the boundaries of two northern electoral districts, putting the Wahnapiatae First Nation in the riding of Nickel Belt instead of Timiskaming–Cochrane. This change was requested by the First Nation and supported by the Chief Electoral Officer. It would give them a representative closer to where they live and work.

As I said before, this bill's objective, like the two that came before it, is simple: Make Ontario's elections work better for everybody. Elections, of course, are not simple. They come with all sorts of complex issues, things like low voter turnout and outdated election processes. If we don't address them, these can create big challenges to the health of our democracy.

In this bill, our government looks to address these issues with real, sensible solutions. While we are making no claim to have solved everything, this legislation builds on the momentum we have created over the past year and a half to make significant progress. If this bill passes, when we get to election day in the spring of 2018, voters across Ontario will see first-hand the positive change that we are envisioning.

Speaker, thank you very much for giving me time to speak on this very important bill. I want to thank all the members from all parties for their work on this bill, and especially to the members of the committee for their hard work. I hope, when it comes to the third reading vote, we will have the support of all members for the passage of this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a great opportunity, obviously, today to speak to this legislation. I will say at the outset that I'm very disappointed that we are yet again seeing another programming motion in the assembly.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that we have probably voted more on time allocation and closure motions than legislation this past session, and I find that that is

disturbing. It's getting to the point where it's actually reaching the ridiculous stage.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, it says third reading debated until 6 p.m. as per time-programming motion.

In any event, I do see that I'm being clocked here, and the government wants to dispute that, but that's unfortunately the reality.

The government House leader mentioned that there were three pieces of legislation that have been put forward by the government with respect to election financing, electoral boundaries and now this, in terms of how we vote. I'd like to point out, as I walk through the three different pieces of legislation to this point, my thoughts and feelings.

First, the electoral boundaries review, Speaker: You're well aware that we are designed in this assembly now so that for each federal member in the province of Ontario, there is a provincial member. I don't dispute that; as one of those members with the highest growth in the entire province, I recognize the requirement for us to have equality of vote. That's why, obviously, I supported that legislation at the time, because right now, I actually have three members of Parliament. I have Chandra Arya in Nepean, Pierre Poilievre in Carleton, and in Orléans I have retired general Andrew Leslie. I can tell you, because of keeping up with the growth in my constituency, it is important that each member of my constituency, each person that lives there, has equality of the vote and that they have the attention to deal with that.

One of the flaws, however, in that legislation, and perhaps that's on us here at the assembly and perhaps the Board of Internal Economy, is that members like myself and from Vaughan and from Oak Ridges–Markham and Brampton are dealing now with multiple members of Parliament but with an extremely limited office budget. So in Ottawa, a member of my community in Nepean–Carleton doesn't actually have the same investment from a constituency office as, for example, somebody from Ottawa–Vanier or somebody from Ottawa West–Nepean or Ottawa Centre. I think that's a significant flaw, and I personally stand in this place to talk about the need for us to have an elector supplement so that we can at least continue on with a lot of the issues that are critical in terms of dealing with our constituency assistance.

I can tell you, from my experience, that the amount of FRO cases coming into my office now has dramatically increased, and I could really use a little bit of assistance in my constituency. I know I've spoken to the other members of high-growth areas. They could use that assistance as well for simple things such as returning mail. When you're dealing with close to 200,000 constituents, as many of us are—I represent more people than live on Prince Edward Island in a riding that's geographically almost the same size as PEI.

So I wanted that on the record. I think that's something the government needs to understand and needs to deal with. I say this as a private member who deals with federal MPs from two different political parties. This

isn't an issue about partisanship; it's an issue about the equality-of-vote principle, and that's why I want to put that on the table.

The next piece of legislation which passed in the House just recently was election financing reform. The minister previously spoke about having the support of the Chief Electoral Officer, but I did note, when I was reading up about this new election financing law reform that has passed, that the Chief Electoral Officer thought that some of the proposals were actually unworkable, namely banning MPPs and candidates from attending fundraisers. I'm going to be interested to see how this fleshes itself out, whether it will be part of a court challenge or whether we're going to see some real challenges with groups like the third-party organization, the Working Families coalition.

That's one of those important things that I think is critical for me to—

Interruption.

1620

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This has never happened before: The government House leader has sent me a heckle, but, Speaker, I won't be intimidated. I will continue to stand in my place. My former leader Tim Hudak once said, "We have a microphone and we're prepared to use it."

Again, I want to talk about the election financing changes that the Chief Electoral Officer said were unworkable. I am very concerned about how this is going to proceed. In many ways, I think it's actually unjust, although I supported it because I do think that we need to have transparency and openness in the public forum. I'm fine with eliminating corporate and union donations. However, I will say that there was not a donation I ever received or accepted that changed my vote on anything.

I will say, having grown up in a very political household—my dad was a municipal councillor for 30 years. He was the campaign manager to John Hamm and Peter MacKay and vice-president of the Nova Scotia PC Party. I can tell you, I understood then the value of grassroots politics. I understood the value of grassroots campaigning and fundraising. It was always an opportunity, when I was a little girl, to go to the lobster do with him where they would spend their \$50, but they got to hear their member of provincial Parliament or the member of the Legislative Assembly give a speech and talk about the state of the province, talk about the state of the country. It was an opportunity for them to invest in their candidate and invest into that campaign that was coming up, and now that, sadly, has been taken away from us. I think it's a dramatic shift in political culture.

I can tell you one thing, Speaker. This is a government that has brought in a lot of transparency and accountability legislation, but they always continue to break it. Remember the information and privacy laws that said you can't delete any emails, and then when they decided to cancel a \$1.2-billion group of gas plants, they deleted all the emails. So who's to say this group is actually going to follow that legislation?

I can tell you one thing: I really don't think they will follow their own law. You don't have to take my word

for it, because they have two of their former deputy chiefs of staff who have been charged: Pat Sorbara under the Election Act—she'll be going to court soon over the Sudbury bribery allegations—and then, of course, we all know Laura K. Miller. We remember her boldfaced lying to the justice committee when we were probing the cancelled gas plants. Well, the OPP didn't buy it, and they've charged her and the former chief of staff to Dalton McGuinty in the gas plant scandal. Again, we're talking about a group of people who pass legislation, "You're not allowed to delete records," but then they go ahead and they delete it and then they're going to be charged. They bring in openness and transparency laws, and then they break the Election Act.

So they decided they were going to change the Election Act and now, miraculously, we're supposed to believe the Liberals—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —when they bring in more accountability legislation and changes to the Election Act?

My colleague from London from the New Democrats said—when I said, "Should we believe the Liberals?" do you know what she said, Speaker?

Interjection: No.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She just yelled out "no." I said it again, and my colleague from Belleville said "no." There's nobody on this side of the House who believes, when they bring in changes to the Election Act or accountability laws, that they're going to follow them. We just keep putting in more legislation, we keep debating it and they keep breaking their promises. They keep breaking the law. They keep breaking their accountability ideas and their policies.

Then it brings us to this one, which we'll support because—you know something? When we're talking about vote-counting equipment, I had the opportunity—oh, Speaker, I had the opportunity to work in a couple of by-elections recently, and it was great. I'm telling you, I enjoyed campaigning for Lorne Coe in Whitby–Oshawa. Now, I did take a fall when I was out there canvassing. It was so cold, I fell on the ice going door to door, but I had a lot of fun. Going door to door in Whitby–Oshawa, we watched Lorne Coe win in a landslide. You know what happened, Speaker? They had these wonderful vote machines. There were a couple of little problems at my voting location, but I'm confident that this will be improved. But the vote results came very, very quickly.

Then I had the opportunity to campaign in Scarborough–Bleue River—I mean, Rouge River. I had an enjoyable time with my dear friend Raymond Cho. What I liked about Raymond's by-election compared to Lorne Coe's—it was much warmer. We were going door to door, it was sunny, it was hot out and it was wonderful.

But we had this star candidate in Raymond Cho. They loved him, going door to door.

Mr. Bill Walker: Everybody loves Raymond.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Everybody loves Raymond. He's just fantastic.

We enjoyed it. Again, the results came in fairly quickly that evening.

I notice my colleague from Ottawa. I want to welcome her today, Nathalie Des Rosiers, from Ottawa–Vanier—congratulations—and my colleague Sam Oosterhoff, from Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, I want to congratulate him too.

I was so excited because I had seen all of this quick technology in Toronto. I thought, “Well, we’re going to have that in Ottawa as well.” But then we didn’t, and we had to rely on the old way of doing things. Watching and waiting for results that night was a bit of a pain in the behind, Speaker, because it took longer. I think that this is an important step for us to take, to modernize the way we count votes.

I must say, Speaker, since I worked at the city of Ottawa long before I was elected here, that at amalgamation in the year 2000—16 years ago—the city of Ottawa was using electronic voting. So it’s about time that the province of Ontario in fact modernizes their capabilities in this sense. I do appreciate that.

In terms of recognizing and encouraging more youth to vote, I think that’s important. I think it’s also interesting that, as we have this discussion, in practice we’re actually dealing with that now, with the youngest member of provincial Parliament ever in the history of this province, Sam Oosterhoff, being elected at the age of 19 in Niagara West–Glanbrook.

My colleague from St. Catharines will enjoy this, because I know he’s an avid hockey fan. My little girl’s a big hockey player, and we were talking hockey on the weekend. She didn’t quite understand that Sam was part of the Progressive Conservative caucus, and she said, “Mama, did you know that there’s a teenager in the Legislature?” I said, “I sure do, honey. He replaced Uncle Tim. He’s in Mama’s caucus. He’s a Conservative.” And she said, “Wow, can I meet him?”

Now, this is the sense of excitement that is happening across Ontario with young kids, as they see somebody who is closer to their age than not—and the change. I tell you, it was interesting for my daughter. I’m sure I’ll bring her here and she’ll get to meet the new honourable member from Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You know something, Speaker? I have a few minutes left, and I listen to the members opposite and it makes me smile, because you’re looking at Waldorf and Statler over there, and all they can do is chirp. They can’t say a nice thing about a young man elected at the age of 19.

I don’t know what these two were doing at 19—probably still watching the Muppets, to get the lines that they’re throwing out here today—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to talk about ethics and accountability one more time. We all have our meeting with the Integrity Commissioner. I met with the Integrity

Commissioner today, and he was talking to me about Blue Jays tickets and who accepts lots of Blue Jays tickets and whether that’s acceptable or not.

Speaker, I told him, “Don’t worry about that. I know the member from St. Catharines. He pays for all his tickets. There’s no question about that.” I think there are no worries about that. I’m sure it’s all good. We’re all very excited about the Blue Jays.

Let’s get back to this bill, because I think it’s important that we have modernization—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And he with authority will throw the stone. Okay? Thank you.

Continue.

Interjection: Wasn’t he warned this morning?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I’m not sure if the member opposite was warned this morning.

I can tell you, I don’t take threats lightly, and I’m not going to be threatened or intimidated in this House while I speak. I’ll continue to do that.

When a government decides that it wants to talk about election reform, ethics and accountability, and then they want to shout you down because they know, after 13 years in office, that they have broken laws; they have been under investigation; they have ignored legislation; they have breached privacy laws, according to the Information and Privacy Commissioner—and none of this, by the way, is anything that I have come up with.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin knows this is all public record. These are independent officers of the Legislature. My colleague from Nickel Belt is nodding her head. We’re all very much aware of what has happened here, Speaker. We’re very much aware.

And then we look at their federal counterparts—oh, my heavens. Have you ever seen a more disastrous approach to electoral reform than what’s happening right now in Ottawa by Maryam Monsef? I have no idea why Justin Trudeau keeps her around—maybe just for the laughs; I’m not quite sure.

1630

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I would ask that the member speak to the bill at hand that we’re debating this afternoon. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest that the member from Nepean–Carleton—don’t drift too far away. We’re getting into dangerous territory. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I really do appreciate the interest in what they’re doing federally and comparing it to what they’re doing here, the fact that they’re both trying to change election laws, election financing rules, boundaries and all that sort of thing, and doing it in such a way—they’re programming it, time-allocating it. They just want it done really quickly, so you always have to question. You hate to

question someone's motives, Speaker, but we're left sometimes questioning on this side of the House why they do the things they do.

But it's been a real pleasure to rise in this debate today. As I said, we supported the electoral boundary review, but I certainly have some very big concerns about being in one of those high-growth ridings, where I think that the Legislature actually needs to address some of these changes.

The second is obviously election financing rules. The public mood out there obviously wants us to ensure that the cash-for-access scheme that the Liberals have adopted and have used stops, but then they decided that they wanted to penalize all of us in the opposition. None of us are having \$10,000-a-plate fundraisers. I know, certainly, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek would never do that. But I can tell you something—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The member from Algoma–Manitoulin would like to have a \$10,000-per-person fundraiser, but I don't think there's enough spaghetti up there for you.

So I worry about that. I think that we are wrong-headed in the approach there. I think that there is a better way to do it.

Finally, Speaker, I bring us back to Bill 45, the third of three pieces of legislation to reform elections, electoral financing and electoral boundaries in the province of Ontario. I say with certainty that my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party will support it. Having said that, again, we do have broad-based concerns over the continual position of this government to ram things through the assembly without adequate debate.

When you're talking about third reading of a bill and there's only 40 minutes per caucus, that really doesn't give everyone an amount of time to bring their constituents' concerns to the floor of this assembly. I must say and I must admit that when you look at a major election law like this, it does concern me.

I often put the question to people: If Stephen Harper put forward an election reform bill and he had 40 minutes for debate, and then decided that the debate was over and we were going to vote on it, that would be a national news story. Kathleen Wynne decides she's going to do this and she's going to ram it through after 40 minutes of debate, and you know what? "Nothing to see here, folks. Move along."

I think that we have to recognize that and we have to be cognizant of the fact that the Liberals have employed this tactic throughout the last session and since they were elected back in 2014—with the aid, by the way, of the Working Families Coalition, who helped them with about \$10 million in attack ads against Tim Hudak. I'm hopeful that as a result of their second election financing bill, that won't happen again, but you never know. These guys, they find the loopholes. I've never seen a crowd find so many loopholes—

Interjection: They design them.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They design them. I can't wait to find out what the loopholes are in this election financing

bill and how they're going to loophole around them. That, to me, is going to be the real test: how they figure out a way to get corporate and union donations and how they can figure out to have fundraisers that aren't revenue-neutral—the revenue-neutral fundraiser that the Liberals have brought in is just incredible.

Speaker, I see that my time is now coming to a close. I must say, it has been a really remarkable session. I speak tomorrow to another piece of legislation, a very serious piece of legislation about children who have died. But I think I'll take this opportunity to say to all of my colleagues across the province of Ontario, from every political party, and of course to our wonderful pages—they were certainly outstanding this year—and to all the wonderful staff at the Ontario Legislature that I wish them a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah and a very prosperous 2017.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in this House on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane. This will likely be my last time speaking in this House for this session, on Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill will have profound implications for the way people are represented and elected in this province.

My colleagues both want to be able to have some time to speak on this, so I'm going to focus on one issue. I was listening intently to the Liberal House leader's remarks, and he brought up the Wahnapiitae First Nation and how they, within this bill, are going to be moved from the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane, which is my riding, to the riding of Nickel Belt, which is the riding of my colleague. This is something that my colleague has been working on since she was elected and that I have been working on with her—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Nine years.

Mr. John Vanthof: Nine years. I have been working on it with her since I've been elected, and that's five years, and the chief of the community has been working on it, Chief Ted Roque, with all the communities behind him.

This is simply moving a part of the riding which was basically water-locked away from the rest of my riding to a riding where their services were provided by the member from Nickel Belt, because they're physically closer. The member from Nickel Belt also provides great services, by the way, but they are physically much closer to the member for Nickel Belt.

I think that's a good-news part of this bill. It's been a long time coming. We were frustrated a lot of times. I believe it's our duty to criticize. It's also our duty to recognize, and at this point—because I was involved in a lot of this stuff, I know how much this took—I'd like to recognize the government House leader for the work he did to make this come to pass.

We were very frustrated. We kept pushing. The member from Nickel Belt introduced private member's legislation. We voted against legislation when they made the

boundaries of southern Ontario—the federal and provincial boundaries—mirror each other. If you recall, Speaker, in the last session, we voted against that legislation, for one reason and one reason only: to bring focus on the plight of the residents of the Wahnapiatae First Nation. We had to keep pushing the government. Elections Ontario, the Chief Electoral Officer, came onside, and when he came onside, I think that helped tip the balance.

Once again, to his credit, the Liberal House leader, Mr. Yasir Naqvi, took that to the government and said, “Look. This makes sense. It’s the right thing to do.” It took a long time but it finally got done, and he deserves recognition for that.

With that, I’d like to end my comments for this year. Merry Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Attorney General, who spoke earlier on this bill. I rise today in this House to continue debate on the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, which is a bill that looks at modernizing our election system and engaging more people in the democratic process.

During my colleague’s comments, I was glad to hear him draw the line from this bill back to the other two bills which were discussed earlier in this Legislature. Our government has made election reform a real priority over the past year and a half, and I think this bill caps those efforts off nicely. Where those two other bills were fairly specific, dealing with electoral boundaries and election finance respectively, this one, as you already heard, is much broader.

As the Attorney General mentioned, we owe a great thank-you to Greg Essensa, the Chief Electoral Officer, for recommending many of the provisions here in this bill today. His knowledge and expertise have been invaluable throughout the process of drafting and debating this bill. He’s also been an active participant in committee meetings for all of these bills, some of which I’ve had the pleasure of attending.

1640

Now I want to give this House a more detailed view of the measures that this bill proposes. I’ll mention the transformative provisions that we put forward and will pick up where my colleague left off—on the ones he did not address.

Changing the scheduled election date: The first measure I’d like to bring up today is changing our province’s fixed election date. Since 2005 and starting in 2007, general elections in Ontario have enjoyed scheduled election dates. The date established in 2005, which still stands today, is the first Thursday in October. Unfortunately, over time, we’ve found this date is not ideal. I’ll explain why.

First of all, at this time of year, temperatures start dropping and the days get shorter. This poses challenges for campaigners when canvassers have to stay out in the evenings. These problems are probably most acutely felt

on election day, when Ontarians themselves have to go out and vote in the cold weather. Basically, better weather and longer daylight hours make it easier to get out and vote.

There’s also the issue of municipal elections, which are held every four years at the end of October in Ontario. When the provincial and municipal election cycles don’t align, it makes no difference. However, due to the unscheduled election in 2014, we are now experiencing both provincial and municipal elections at the same time. That will be the case in 2018. Although the provincial election would happen first, mayoral and council races across the province would have already begun by the time Ontarians head to the polls. Having these events compete for attention will be a disservice to voters and to the people working outside, doing their work trying to bring voters to the polling stations.

We’re proposing to change the fixed election date to the first Thursday in June. That means that the next provincial election will be on June 7, 2018. This capitalizes on good weather and also provides daylight at a time when school is still in session and most Ontarians have not yet gone on vacation; they’re usually still at home. That’s another reason for changing the date.

Another one of the key items in this bill and one that the Attorney General touched on earlier is our plan to create a provisional voter register for people who are 16 or 17 years old. I’d like to address some potential questions and concerns about this proposal because, while we’re very excited about the proposal and the impact that we believe it will have on the democratic process, we also have to speak about the potential implications very seriously.

The provisional register would be a database containing our young people’s basic personal information, such as their name, their address and their date of birth. Our proposed legislation deliberately restricts what the information in the original register will be used for—voter education and outreach by Elections Ontario—but there are some other concerns to be mindful of as well.

Keeping this sort of information private is always important. When it comes to minors, it’s even more so. That is why—and my colleague alluded to it earlier—it’s so helpful to be able to draw on the expertise of Elections Ontario and the Chief Electoral Officer in these sorts of matters. Elections Ontario has the infrastructure to manage this project, and their privacy policy is available online for the public to see. In administering the permanent register of electors, they have developed a range of best practices for responsibly managing this information. This ensures that all employees receive proper privacy training.

I would also like to stress that this register will be offered entirely on a voluntary basis. Young people will be able to decide themselves if they want to be on this register or if they do not want to be on this register. They can always decide, if they’re on this register, if they want to take their names off the register.

Making the register a voluntary measure is probably the best way to have this move forward. I believe that

this action of signing up is more likely to drive home the importance of participation than to say, “We ought to have automatic preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds.” I think this could end up being a valuable change for the province, and, should this bill pass, I look forward to seeing it in action.

Another key item that the Attorney General mentioned was the introduction of electronic vote tabulators and some other process changes that, together, will allow a new technology-enabled staffing model to be used on polling day. I want to further highlight how the new process and staffing model would work, and how extensive these benefits would be.

Under the current model, the bulk of the manual work in the regular operation of a polling station happens when voters go to collect their ballots. Each voter is served by a poll clerk and a deputy returning officer, who take their ID and their voter registration card, if they have one, find their name on the voter list—which is often pages and pages long—cross it off, and then manually issue a ballot. Under the new system, only one election official will be required to manage this step. With the help of an e-poll book, or an electronic voter list, confirming registration and printing a ballot will be as quick and easy as scanning a bar code. Voters who need more help or who don’t have ID would be served at a dedicated table, meaning that lines would move even faster for those who came prepared.

At the end of the night, votes would be tallied up by the electronic tabulators, requiring fewer people at the end of the day. Having gone through so many elections myself, I think that it’s a much more expedited way of doing it, and also a way of doing it that is safe and transparent as well.

Just so that I’m completely clear: We aren’t talking about the sort of fully electronic voting machines that are sometimes used in the United States. Rather, these technologies are much simpler and maintain a transparent, tangible voting process. This system still uses paper ballots, and keeps all of the advantages that come with that. From a technical standpoint, it also provides a fail-safe option, in the event that results are ever disputed or called into question: There’s always a paper record to go back to. The ballots that voters marked and cast are kept.

Another advantage, as the Attorney General said, is ensuring that public trust is maintained, with a process that people recognize and believe in. That’s not just speculation. After the staffing model’s pilot project during this year’s Whitby–Oshawa by-election, voters were polled on the new process. The results were overwhelmingly positive: 96% of voters who were polled felt that the updated process had been easy, and 91% supported using the new technology in more elections going forward. This sort of consensus gives us a clear path forward in modernizing our elections.

In his remarks, the Attorney General put a lot of emphasis on the notion of modernization. In one way or another, many parts of this bill either adapt our election system to changes that we’re seeing in the world today or

prepare it for changes that are yet to come. This next measure does both.

In recent years, we’ve seen dramatic shifts in our housing demographics. One of these shifts is the increase in condos and multi-residence buildings in Ontario and across Canada. By 2011, a national housing survey showed that 12.1% of households across Canada were in condominiums, including high-rise and low-rise apartment buildings and row houses. In Toronto, the number was much higher: It’s 23% of all households. If you’ve watched the rapid high-rise development in this city, it seems safe to say that these numbers have only continued to rise since that time, and show no sign of slowing down.

Given that multi-residence buildings are a large and growing part of life in Ontario, we need to be sure that the rules around our elections are keeping up with these changes. The Chief Electoral Officer has expressed concern about candidates and political parties being denied access to these buildings. As more Ontarians move into these buildings, this issue becomes more and more relevant.

If passed, this bill would establish new rules for accessing multi-residential buildings and allow Elections Ontario to enforce the right of access with administrative penalties. I think this is very important. The local returning officer would have the power to fine a building owner or a condominium corporation if a canvasser who is at least 18 years old and who sought access to building during the prescribed time period was refused access to the building within 24 hours of making the request. On election day, that 24-hour period would no longer apply, and access would have to be granted automatically and immediately.

Canvassing is important. It gives candidates and their potential constituents a chance to interact, face to face, which can be otherwise difficult to come by. The new rules would make it easier for canvassers to ensure that nobody is excluded from this opportunity simply because they live in a condominium or an apartment building.

I’ve already touched on the importance of privacy in the context of the provisional voter register. Keeping people’s personal information safe is an important issue, and it has wider-reaching impacts than just that example.

1650

Our proposed legislation also includes new measures to help ensure that voter data is treated appropriately by all parties. In our current system, the Chief Electoral Officer shares certain information with candidates to help guide their outreach efforts during an election. There are real advantages to this: Giving candidates this data helps them to mobilize their voters. The challenge is striking a balance. We want to maximize these benefits while still protecting voter privacy.

The measures in this bill would add to both sides of this equation. They extend the information sharing to registered political parties, as well as candidates, providing even more opportunity for outreach and engagement. At the same time, they raise the requirements for the

parties and candidates who do receive this information. Under the new rules, the information would not be shared with a party or candidate until they had provided the Chief Electoral Officer with a privacy policy deemed adequate under the Elections Ontario guidelines. The election officer actually supports this. This would allow the Chief Electoral Officer a mechanism to enforce the existing guidelines and to hold all parties handling this information to the high standard of privacy that Ontarians deserve.

Speaker, just as the measures in this bill vary by subject, they also vary in scope. While some could be transformative, others would make smaller changes to administrative processes and rules. Most Ontarians might not even notice their impacts, but overall these changes would help to make our system work better. For example, this bill would redesign the registration, nomination and endorsement process for candidates, shortening a three-step process into one that could be managed by a single form. Another example is that this bill would also provide the Chief Electoral Officer with more flexibility in planning communications to voters as technologies and platforms evolve.

I also want to briefly mention the provision that would eliminate the first advertising blackout period for unscheduled elections. I've heard criticism from the opposition parties about this measure, saying that it gives the government an unfair advertising advantage. Let me be clear here: We've taken this step on the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer. He provided this advice to us, and the simple fact is that this provision is no longer relevant. The Chief Electoral Officer has called it "outdated."

Given the way the media operates these days, it's just not possible for one party to buy up all available channels of communication before a snap election. Modernizing our system also means taking obsolete rules off the books, and that's what we're doing here.

Finally, I would like to mention the proposed Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. The Attorney General already spoke to this and covered some of the details in his remarks, so I'll keep this short. I would also like to voice my support for this provision and the approach to decision-making that it represents. If this bill passes, I look forward to seeing the recommendations that the commission brings forward.

It only seems right to involve communities in decisions about their democratic representation, particularly indigenous communities. Through this commission, we will be doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, this bill outlines a vision for our province's election system. It lays out a direction and an ethos for reforming the elections process in Ontario. Any change we make to the system must be balanced by regard for the public's trust and faith in our elections. I believe this bill successfully balances those considerations. It would make Ontario elections work better for everybody in this province. I hope that all members will join me here in supporting these changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and add to the debate on Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016.

Speaker, this bill seeks to amend various acts with respect to provincial elections. This act includes the Election Act, the Election Finances Act, the Representation Act and the Education Act. Now, the establishment of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission is one of the key components of this bill, but I will let my colleagues from the north address this.

Bill 45 is the government's attempt to address numerous recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer from the 2014 general election and the by-elections that have occurred over the past few years.

It's refreshing to see this government actually listen to some of the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer. In the past, they had ignored numerous recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer, including calls to place similar limits on third-party advertising, as other provinces and the federal government have already done.

I would like to point out that the Attorney General was one of those Liberal MPPs who voted against placing restrictions on third-party advertising—not once, not twice, but three times. Come on. He first voted against placing limits on third-party advertising in 2011, on a bill presented by my colleague the member from Wellington-Halton Hills; and again in 2013, when he voted against my bill; and a third time in 2015, when he voted against a bill brought forward by the astute member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Now the Attorney General has flip-flopped and is in favour of third-party advertising limits, which he voted against multiple times in the past. But it is a positive that the Attorney General has begun to listen to our Chief Electoral Officer—better late than never.

The government has made it a point to mention that they are trying to improve voter turnout. Well, I will give the government credit: They are very trying.

As pointed out by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Ontario used to enjoy a 65% voter turnout, but by the 2003 election, there was a 57% turnout. Then in 2007, it fell to a 52% turnout and, in the 2011 election, a 48% turnout.

The 2014 election saw a record number of spoiled ballots: 31,399 Ontarians declined their vote in the last election, the highest rejection level since 1975.

It might be interesting to point out that the most protest votes hit the ridings of Brant, Etobicoke Centre, Kitchener-Waterloo, London West, Mississauga-Erindale, Oak Ridges-Markham, Ottawa South, St. Catharines, Windsor West, and Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Well, Speaker, how can we make people feel more connected in the political process?

Samara Canada, an organization with the goal of increasing civic engagement, and that is dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics, found that petitioning is

the second-most popular form of political participation among Canadians, with 64% of those the organizations surveyed for their Samara's Democracy 360 report saying they've signed a petition in the past year.

As for our neighbours to the south, the White House accepts e-petitions. The federal government here in Canada started accepting e-petitions last year. Surely, as we near the end of 2016, we can figure out a way to bring e-petitions to Ontario, considering they are widely used, not only here in Canada but around the world, and for many, many years already. I know first-hand that the House of Commons in the UK uses e-petitions as well.

Let me just say that I don't want to see paper petitions go away, because I know many of our constituents prefer paper petitions, and not everyone would be comfortable filling one out online or even filing one. But surely we must be able to provide that option, to encourage more participation in the democratic process.

Then again, the Ontario government has never been the fastest adopter of modern technology. We have BlackBerrys, and others have WhiteBerrys. But perhaps, in a few years, the government will announce that Ontario is now prepared to accept petitions sent by fax?

1700

A very interesting change under Bill 45 deals with candidates and their canvassers gaining entry to multiple-residence buildings. Oftentimes, campaigns will send canvassers to buildings, such as apartment or condo complexes, with copies of relevant sections of legislation. A lot of people simply do not know that they are legally required to give candidates or volunteers access to buildings, which is why it is helpful to provide this information to campaign volunteers.

For example, the Condominium Act states, "No corporation or employee or agent of a corporation shall restrict reasonable access to the property by candidates, or their authorized representatives, for election to the House of Commons, the Legislative Assembly or an office in a municipal government or school board if access is necessary for the purpose of canvassing or distributing election material."

So access to multiple-residence buildings by candidates and canvassers is already protected under Ontario law. But Bill 45 wants to create heavy financial penalties for failing to provide this access. It's a little ironic that the Liberals are in hot water for holding cash-for-access events with tickets costing as much as \$10,000 and at the same time they want to charge unsuspecting landlords thousands of dollars for failing to give their candidates access.

We certainly do have some concerns about the costly penalties that this bill would create, given that the access of candidates and campaign volunteers is already protected by law. This has the potential to be a cash grab that would do little to protect our democracy and could, in fact, hurt Ontarians.

In my own experience, I have not been too pushy with building staff or others when it comes to access. Sometimes, even after letting them know that they're legally

required to provide access, they're hesitant to allow you inside. This is understandable, because their priority is the safety of their residents. In these cases, I thank them for their time and move on to the next building. Not once have I wished that we could go after these people and make them pay hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars in fines.

Bill 45 also touched on the Election Finances Act. This act is going through some changes due to Bill 2. There are still some important unanswered questions about the changes to the Election Finances Act, which have been called a "charade" by Democracy Watch Canada. As Bill 45 also seeks to amend the Election Finances Act, perhaps the government can use this opportunity to add some clarity to the act and close a potential loophole.

Speaker, the Liberal Party president has stated that the Liberal Party of Ontario would be paying the legal bills for Premier Wynne's former second-in-command and, most recently, the CEO of the Liberal re-election campaign, currently facing bribery charges after allegedly violating the Election Act. These bills won't start piling up until next year—conveniently, right when the Ontario Liberal Party will receive millions of taxpayer dollars in a direct payout that they're arranging for themselves by changing the Election Finances Act. Well, since when are bills retroactive? The new funding should become effective as of the June 2018 election.

As we continue to debate Bill 45, which touches upon the same act, perhaps the government can answer the following: Will the Liberal Party of Ontario be able to use taxpayer dollars, which they're giving themselves as they change the Election Finances Act, to pay for the defence of a senior Liberal charged with violating the Election Act? Perhaps that's something that could be raised at the committee stage for the bill, as it seeks to amend both the Election Act, which was allegedly violated by the former CEO of the Liberal Party of Ontario, and the Election Finances Act, which could potentially see public dollars used to pay the legal bills of powerful Liberals.

Well, Speaker, there are some good things to be found in this bill, and the goal of increasing voter turnout is perhaps a noble one, but perhaps the best way to fight voter apathy is to simply listen to the people and make them feel as though they are valued as part of our democracy by providing better governance.

Now, I know it sounded like I was really slamming the government in my few moments here, and I actually was. However, I will be supporting this bill.

In conclusion, Speaker, I would like to wish my colleagues here in the Ontario Legislature a very heartfelt Merry Christmas. I would encourage everyone here and at home, as we do back in my home, to invite someone who's perhaps less fortunate over for a nice healthy Christmas dinner and allow them to have an experience: some great food, fellowship and fun. Not only will you brighten the lives of others, it'll make your day even brighter too.

Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I wish you and others a Merry Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Like my colleague before me, I want to start with a huge thank you. This story started almost 15 years ago, when the boundaries of the northern districts were redistributed. We had 11 ridings in northern Ontario, and a mistake was made. The mistake meant that the vast swaths of land between Timiskaming and Nickel Belt was all given to Timiskaming. It didn't make much difference for most of it, except that at the west end of that vast parcel of land was a First Nation, Wahnapiatae First Nation, which had been there for thousands of years.

I have close family connections to Wahnapiatae, because my husband's family has had a camp on Lake Wanapitei for as long as you can remember. We have a picture of my husband's mom when she was pregnant with my husband—and that's many, many years ago—on the site of Wanapitei.

There's always been a very good relationship between the campers on Lake Wanapitei lake and the Wahnapiatae First Nation. Norm Recollet and his wife had a single, one-room wooden home on the Wahnapiatae reserve. They liked to have visitors, and my husband liked, and still does, to hunt, so they used to go through the reserve to go to their hunting ground. Norm Recollet, who was the chief of the reserve at the time, would say, "Oh, yeah, I saw a few birds over that way, and if you want partridge, you go that way."

There's a creek, Post Creek, that goes through the north part of the reserve. He had a boat, so they would make friends with Norm so that they could use the boat to go across Post Creek and go hunting. On the way back, Norm would shuttle them back, put them in their boat and bring them across the creek in exchange for a few partridges, and all was good.

So the relationship between Wahnapiatae First Nation and Capreol in the northeast end of my riding has been there forever. They were in my riding when that part of my riding used to be called Sudbury East. It changed names and became Nickel Belt, but they were always included. They always voted in Capreol. The voting station has always been in Capreol. It's still a few kilometres to go from—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Elie Martel.

1710

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, when Elie Martel was there, absolutely, and when Shelley Martel was there. And then this happened. Some people in southern Ontario who described the new district of Nickel Belt did not include the Wahnapiatae First Nation. They included it in Timiskaming-Cochrane. Since that time, the chief, Ted Roque, first went and saw my predecessor, Shelley Martel, who was the MPP for Nickel Belt at the time. He went and saw her and said, "Something happened. We went to vote, we went to the polling station and your name was not on the ballot. There were names of people there that we had never heard of, and we didn't know exactly what was going on."

Well, they looked into it. We connected with the Chief Electoral Officer and we found out that Wahnapiatae was not in Nickel Belt anymore; it was in Timiskaming-Cochrane, much to the surprise of everybody, mainly the people from Wahnapiatae who tried to go vote and realized that they were voting for people that they did not even know. They had seen all of the electoral signs of the different people running for Nickel Belt and had made up their minds as to who they were going to vote for—

Interjection: They were stuck with me.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, that was way before you. And then they looked at the ballot and said, "Well, what happened there?" They connected with the Chief Electoral Officer. They wrote to the Premier at the time, Mr. McGuinty. They tried to have that changed, to no avail.

When I got elected, a little bit over nine years ago, although they knew they were not my constituents, the chief came to see me, with a few members from the band. Their number one request was, "How do we go about fixing that?" Since I've been elected, for the last nine years, I have written to the Premier, I have written to the Chief Electoral Officer, and it became clear that the only way this wrong could be righted was through an act of Parliament. We needed to change the boundaries in a bill.

So you will imagine my happiness when the government presented the Electoral Boundaries Act. That was the moment we had been waiting for—at the time, we had been waiting for it for eight years. That was the moment we had been waiting for for eight years. We were going to look at the Electoral Boundaries Act and the wrong that was done to the people of Wahnapiatae.

It is pretty disrespectful, Speaker, to be told that although you have been there for thousands of years, your provincial government does not know you exist. Your provincial government doesn't know that there are people who live there, that have lived there for thousands of years, and yet your provincial government doesn't know that you exist. When you talk about First Nation reconciliation, it doesn't score really high when you are invisible to your provincial government, to the point where they don't know you're there, that they don't know you exist.

The Electoral Boundaries Act was put forward. At the time, it was Madeleine Meilleur who was in charge of that bill. I had a very good relationship with Madeleine because she also had the francophone portfolio, so she and I had worked together. I explained to her exactly what had happened. I sent her a letter as to what needed to be done, to be corrected. The chief wrote her a letter that I hand-delivered to her to show her that we had the support of the chief and the band members, and that the Chief Electoral Officer had said that the only way to fix this was by an act of Parliament. We needed to pass a law that said so, that changed the boundaries, and she agreed.

So I worked with my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and when the bill was in clause-by-clause, we put forward an amendment to make sure that this was going to happen. We went through everything we had done: that we had written to the Chief Electoral Officer,

and here's what he said; that we had written to the minister who was in charge of the bill; and we showed the letter from the chief. And the people in committee voted—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Against.

M^{me} France G  linas: —against it. It was like, “What? What happened there?” Everybody told me that all was good, that they understood, that finally there was an act that was looking at boundaries of ridings and things were going to be changed. It was all for naught. They told me that they did not want to open up the floodgates, that all First Nations were going to ask for the same thing.

Well, I don't give up easily, Speaker. I wrote to all 132 First Nations in our province and I asked them, “Would you like to change boundaries and be in a different riding?” Not one of them, except for Wahnapi  tae, answered that they wanted to change ridings. So I don't know what kind of a flood they were talking about, but we were on dry land here. There was no drip; there was no nothing. There was no valid argument as to why they had voted no.

I don't give up, so I put forward a private member's bill so that we know exactly the language that needs to be used to change—because describing an unorganized area is not always easy. We got all of that done, verified by all of the lawyers: how Timiskaming–Cochrane would be described; how my riding would be described. Chief Roque came all the way from Wahnapi  tae First Nation down here to Queen's Park, and we held a press conference. We let everybody know exactly how this could be done.

Then, when Bill 45 was presented, which talked about changing the boundaries in the Far North, he came back to Queen's Park. He did a deputation in front of the committee that was in charge of the bill, explained all of the work that they had done; explained, basically, the wrong that had been done to his community and how, in the spirit of reconciliation, we had a chance to do things better.

We had a chance to prove that, yes, we know that you have been there for a very long time. We know that you have contact with the people of Nickel Belt, that all the kids from Wahnapi  tae First Nation go to school in Nickel Belt—they go to school at C.R. Judd primary school in Capreol—and how they access the physician services, the pharmacy, the grocery store. They work, they shop, they live close to our community, and this is where they belong.

He made a very good pitch, the best he could, to the members of the committee to explain. He sent his recommendation in writing. Then we received from Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler a letter that asked us to do the same thing. I will read it into the record. He says, “Lastly”—because he has been talking about Bill 45—“we acknowledge that Wahnapi  tae First Nation reserve (reserve no. 11)” —I don't know why, but that's how it's called—“has for years requested that they be included in the Nickel Belt riding rather than Timiskaming–Cochrane due to the proximity

for their health, educational services and other business activities. We understand that MPP G  linas had submitted a proposed amendment to Bill 45 to change the riding boundaries of Nickel Belt, and we encourage the government to respect and accommodate the request of Wahnapi  tae First Nation.” This was submitted to the committee.

Then we had the Chief Electoral Officer—unfortunately, I have misplaced his quote—who asked us to do the exact same thing, who asked us to take this opportunity to change the boundaries.

Not leaving anything to chance, I went and talked with the minister in charge of the bill, the Attorney General. I am very grateful to the work that the Attorney General has put forward. It was not an easy fit. This part of the legislation was not open, so I needed to get unanimous consent from all sides of the House. The Attorney General worked with me to make sure that the Liberals on the committee would vote in favour. I want to thank the MPP from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, as well as the MPP from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who agreed to give unanimous consent to open this part of the bill. Once we had unanimous consent to open this part of the bill, the majority of us voted in favour of the bill, so it's finally done.

1720

It was a long road, but I wanted to share this, so that if it ever happens again that a well-meaning lawyer someplace at Queen's Park makes a mistake when it comes to boundaries, I hope they are not going to have to go through the same extent of work that we had to go through to make sure that Wahnapi  tae was to come into the riding.

Speaker, while I have the floor, I was supposed to correct my record, and I'm going to use 30 seconds to do this. This morning during question period, I said “every other province,” and I meant to say “many other provinces are funding these procedures.” Just to correct the Hansard, I said “every,” and I meant to say “many other provinces.” Just an aside, but I have the floor, so I took this opportunity.

Let me go into some of the details of Bill 45. We had many recommendations that came from the Chief Electoral Officer. One of the requests from the Chief Electoral Officer, I'll read from his written submission: “The new section 4.6 in the Election Act, which affords my office discretion to employ voting equipment in polls across Ontario, is problematic. It is worded in a way that prohibits me from deploying assistive voting devices other than in a returning office during the advance vote period.”

So while the Chief Electoral Officer was doing his deputation in committee, he basically referred to that part of the bill as an error. It looks like an error, anyway. How could we tell the Chief Electoral Officer, “Don't have assistive equipment,” so that people who are blind, people who are in wheelchairs, people who have communication issues cannot vote? This is why we have those assistive devices, and we have a bill that tells him

that he's not allowed to use those assistive devices during the advance vote period?

I put forward an amendment so that the Chief Electoral Officer would be allowed to use those assistive devices during the advance voting period, not only in his office but in other voting areas, and for reasons unknown, the Liberal government voted that down. I don't understand what they have against people with disabilities, but people with disabilities don't always vote on voting day. They are people like you and I, and sometimes it's more convenient for them to go vote in the advance poll.

Well, we now have a bill that forbids the Chief Electoral Officer from deploying those assistive devices, except on voting day or in the returning office. This is not in line with the spirit of making Ontario accessible. Frankly, I don't understand why they voted that down. It is disrespectful to people with disabilities, as well as to the Chief Electoral Officer.

We also heard from Nishnawbe Aski Nation, better known as NAN. Nishnawbe Aski Nation leadership chose not to appear in front of the committee because they find it completely disrespectful that they were not consulted before. I quote from their written submission:

"To date there has been no meaningful attempt by the government of Ontario to consult with NAN or, to our knowledge, NAN First Nations"—they represent 39 First Nations in northeastern and northwestern Ontario—"prior to or during the introduction of this legislation.

"This is unacceptable, and a breach of the government's obligation to consult with First Nations on matters affecting them....

"We are greatly concerned that the government of Ontario has made no meaningful attempt to consult or engage with NAN, and especially our First Nations in the affected electoral ridings prior to the introduction of this legislation. If the goal is to benefit representation of First Nations, appropriate consultation and community engagement should have been held before the introduction of this legislation."

I would say, not a ringing endorsement of this bill.

So I put forward an amendment that was quite simple. We can't undo the past. They did not consult before they brought it for first reading, second reading and deputations. But at least I wanted to add back into the bill meaningful engagement with Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation First Nations:

"In recognition of the inherent and treaty rights of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation First Nations, the government of Ontario shall meaningfully engage with Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Nishnawbe Aski Nation First Nations regarding any proposed legislation that would affect the electoral representation of First Nations in the part of Ontario divided into 11 northern electoral districts."

It was putting in the law what is in our treaty. The government of Ontario must start to respect the treaty that we have signed with those First Nations represented by NAN. But unfortunately, they voted against that.

I want to remind the government that Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which used to be known as Grand Council Treaty

No. 9, represents 49 First Nations, with a total of about 45,000 people, that are grouped into tribal councils. The NAN territory encompasses the James Bay Treaty No. 9 and the Ontario portion of Treaty No. 5. It has a land mass that covers two thirds of the province of Ontario, about 210,000 square miles. I'm not too sure how many kilometres that is, but it is a big part of our province.

They are the duly elected. We call them the legitimate representation for the socio-economic, political aspirations of the First Nation members for all levels of government. They allow local self-determination while establishing spiritual, cultural, social and economic independence.

Those rights, those treaties, have to be recognized. They have to be honoured. But when the government puts a piece of legislation forward that completely forgets that they have a duty to consult, it's not starting on the right foot at all.

The next one was also a recommendation from NAN. It basically said: "That NAN be the vetting proponent in the selection of the indigenous representative for the Far North boundaries commission. NAN cannot endorse or condone the commission or any amendment process if we are not included in the selection of representatives from NAN."

What I had put forward is that given the two community members who identify as indigenous persons, "at least one of whom shall be nominated by Nishnawbe Aski Nation." They represent the big majority of the people in the two electoral districts that will be changed. There is a little wee part of it in the far northwest of our province that belongs to Treaty 3, but for the rest of it, they are all First Nations represented by NAN. I agree that there are a few non-First Nations and there are a few Métis who live in those areas, but the great majority of the people who live there are part of NAN, and they should be represented on the commission that will be put forward. The government voted that down.

1730

The next recommendation also had to do with the recommendations from NAN. I'll read from their presentation: "We understand that one of the stated goals of this proposed legislation is to increase representation of First Nations in the north." They go on to say, "We accept and welcome the intent to increase representation to First Nations communities in the north who, given the vast scope of NAN territory, are underrepresented and lack access to constituency offices and the services provided. But we question why the scope of the commission is limited to just one or two electoral districts—did this come from recommendations by the" Chief Electoral Officer "or political direction?"

While the Chief Electoral Officer was there presenting in front of the committee, I asked him, "Did that recommendation come from you? Are you, the Chief Electoral Officer, the one who recommended it?" His answer was clear—it's in Hansard—and it was no. This is something that the Liberal government made up for political purposes.

NAN is not supportive of that, so I put a recommendation forward that basically would have allowed the commission to—"with respect to the boundaries and names of all of the 11 northern electoral districts set out in the schedule." The Liberal government voted that down.

The next recommendation also came from the NAN submission. I will read it: "That the government of Ontario immediately and meaningfully engage with NAN and NAN First Nations, especially those in the affected ridings, before proceeding with the implementation of this legislation.... Prior to its report to government, the commission must meet with NAN on its findings and recommendations and allow NAN the opportunity to support or provide notice of our concerns. Only then will NAN be prepared to take a formal position on Bill 45 and on the work of the commission."

If you've ever heard a shot across the bow, this was it. They are already telling this government that if you don't consult with them in a meaningful way, if you don't give them an opportunity to look at the findings and the recommendations, they will not support the report from the commission.

So I put in legislation that "the commission shall meet with Nishnawbe Aski Nation to share its preliminary decisions and recommendations and to give Nishnawbe Aski Nation the opportunity to make representations in respect of the preliminary decisions and recommendations before they are made final"—a pretty reasonable request given the fact that they never did the consultation they were supposed to do.

Sorry, Speaker. I couldn't take it anymore; I had to blow my nose. There's only so much one can put up with when you have a cold and I had reached my limit.

It was a pretty reasonable recommendation given that they never did consultation, but this too was voted down.

The next motion was from the Chief Electoral Officer. Basically, he had asked that a review of boundaries of all electoral districts in Ontario be done at least once every 10 years, starting after January 2017. You've heard my opening stories of how long it took to bring Wahnapiatae back into the right riding. If we had had an opportunity every 10 years to look at the boundaries, it would have been easier. This was voted down.

I see that my colleague wants a few minutes on the clock.

The next recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer also wanted some portions of the bill to come in a little bit later to give him time to put them in place properly. These were also voted down.

So thank you, thank you, thank you for bringing Wahnapiatae into Nickel Belt. That was a pile of work—

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —yes—and a lot of work. But in the rest of the bill, we could have done better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There's only a few minutes left on the clock. I'm listening to the speeches that have been

given on Bill 45, making notes. I guess I probably could chat about that for a little while, but to be quite frank, it will be the last opportunity to speak this year in the Legislature for me, and I thought I would maybe just take a moment or two to reflect on the holiday season, with your indulgence, and wish everybody at home in my riding of Nipissing a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. I hope that we'll have a chance to get out through the riding and visit with as many family and friends as possible.

I look forward to coming back here in February and continuing to do the work that we do together—a little bit of thrusting back and forth. But at least it will be fine, and we can take a couple of months back in our ridings, meet with our constituents and get a fuller understanding of what it is they're looking for us to do when we come back here in February.

Speaker, to you and your family, I wish a merry Christmas and a happy holiday to you. To all our families and friends in Nipissing, we really look forward to the holiday season with them.

I thank you for this opportunity and your indulgence, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege to stand here in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. As everybody else is doing—I wanted to have that courtesy as well of sending out a very merry Christmas to everyone here at the Legislature, but also to all the good people that I'll be enjoying Christmas cheer with, and maybe a few meals, across my riding. I look forward to seeing you in your communities over the holidays and then getting back here, rolling up my sleeves and getting back to work.

Here we are today, talking about Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, which would amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act, the Representation Act, 2015, and the Education Act. I don't need to stress to you how important it is—the inherent element of our democracy is exercising your right to vote—how that is a privilege, and how that is our responsibility and a serious responsibility for all of us here to take in our roles as parliamentarians but also as Ontarians. By voting, what we're doing is exercising our right to have our voices heard and expressing our opinions. When we do this, we do this for reasons; we do this for cause; we do this because we want to change our lives. We do this in a way that we are going to be making some of these changes—and, particularly, the changes that we're looking at doing here today—that we have to follow this process and we have to make them carefully.

Under the act, what we're actually looking at doing as well is changing the time of when the election is going to be held, in order to have greater engagement in the election process—by changing the date from October to the first Thursday in June—so that we can have more individuals participate. Because we all hate to see repetitive and ongoing re-elections time after time after

time. Some would say that this will encourage a greater voter turnout. That's going to be the test, as far as what we're doing with this law.

Having said that, a lot of people sometimes lose interest, because you have federal elections, you have by-elections, you have provincial elections and then you have municipal elections. People get fed up. Then people look at what's going on in our papers, looking at the headlines that are going on. There's still a great level of distaste and disengagement with our election process, because, quite frankly, people can't identify with what is being reported in our papers. They're getting frustrated and saying, "What's going on?" All of us seem to get painted with the same paintbrush. Maybe this is going to be a triggering point, something that's going to light a fire, which brings me to my second point.

1740

During the Whitby–Oshawa by-election, we actually used a new tool in the election process. We ran a little pilot project using an electronic vote tabulator, which was used in 42 of the 70 polls that were there in that riding. It just goes to show you that things are evolving and things are changing, and we have to adapt to that.

Again, coming from northern Ontario, we want to make sure that these services are also going to be available to us in northern Ontario and that they work effectively, because there are some challenges as far as technology that is available to all my constituents across my riding in northern Ontario.

I have little time to talk on this particular bill. What I do want to stress is the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission and the role that it's going to play in this and the role that we failed to actually acknowledge.

If there's something that we should be learning—and I'm going to go back to my role as critic for northern development and mines. When you look at what happened in this province and what is not happening when we consider the Ring of Fire, why haven't we progressed with the Ring of Fire? There are two reasons why. It's because there was a barrier that was built and there were announcements that were made and there was legislation that was introduced before we even had a consultation process, before we even sat and had a discussion with a lot of the First Nations that are up in northern Ontario. Now we're doing that. But it has created a barrier. It has created a distrust.

Here we are again, doing the same thing with this piece of legislation. We're making a decision that is definitely going to be impacting those First Nations. Yes, it's a good step forward. Through the submissions that have come in from NAN, they are encouraged to see this, because it may involve greater participation, it may generate a discussion, and it certainly will have greater involvement. But here we are again. Did we not learn the error of our ways as far as what we did with the Ring of Fire? Here we are again, doing that same error, making decisions without involving First Nations, or we're going to be involving them afterwards: "Let's take an action, and then we'll talk about it."

Those are not the principles of reconciliation and accommodation. That is not the way that we're supposed to be conducting ourselves with respect to a true reconciliation with First Nations. The government has been making this error for far too long. Stop making that mistake. You are creating barriers. That's what you're doing. You are pushing people away.

I have to give you a shout-out for actually looking at bringing in younger individuals asking questions about the election process by getting them involved and getting a list so that they can pre-register when they turn 18. That's a shout-out. I'll always give credit where credit is due.

But you're making a huge, huge error by making the same mistake over and over again when it comes to First Nations.

In the little time that I have left, this is a pretty powerful message that is coming from NAN. It says that "we have title over our traditional territories and have agreed, based on our true understanding of the spirit and intent of Treaty No. 9 and Treaty No. 5 ... to share the land, subject to certain conditions...."

"Our inherent and treaty rights supersede any federal and provincial legislation that is enacted without our free, prior and informed consent."

We've got to do better. We've got to do a lot better whether it comes to our First Nations so that we can get them involved and we do want them involved and they are involved. But if we're not going to recognize, if we're not going to appreciate, their treaties—our treaties—because we're all products of treaties; whether you know that or not, we are—we're making the error once again.

I had a lot more to say on this particular bill, but unfortunately I just won't have the time. But I'm looking forward to reaching out to a lot of the First Nations across my riding, of which I have 21. They're asking the question, "Why was it limited to just two ridings?" There are First Nations communities across this entire province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker. I will make sure that I am transfixed on you—I learned this morning.

I do want, as the member from Nipissing did, to wish everybody a merry Christmas from my riding of Ottawa South. To everyone who works here in the building, everybody at the Clerks' desk, the people who help us every day, I wish you a merry Christmas. It's a real pleasure to work with you. I hope you have a great holiday, some time with your family, and a great new year.

I want to say a few things about the bill and just echo a few things that the member opposite said around participation.

I think the provisions in the bill around registering young voters and getting them engaged in the process is a really important piece in the bill. It's not the biggest part

of the bill, but I think we have to do that to engage people.

He did speak about the first Thursday in June as being the new date. I think the key thing about that is, the weather and the amount of sunlight and daylight that we have give us an opportunity to connect with and contact voters, as most of us do knock on doors. Sometimes it's a bit hard to do that at 8 o'clock in October. People don't always come to the door. So I think that's a really important part of the bill.

To the member's comments with regard to cynicism: In part, we do that to ourselves. We spend a lot of time beating each other up. We do that to ourselves, so we feed into that. I'd just like to suggest, as I have on other occasions, that we need to consider, when we're doing that, the motives that we sometimes impute to each other in terms of when we're in debate and when we're outside of this place. As I've said before, I think all members are here to represent their communities. We have different ways of making that approach. But those things that are important to the people that we serve are important to all of us. I think it's important that sometimes we give people the impression that we do work together, because we do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I just want to say how pleased I am to wish the very best to all the members of the Ontario Legislature at this time. My good friend the member for Wellington–Halton Hills was just over, chatting, and wishing all on our side the very best, and that's what I'm doing at the present time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess we're getting away from debate here.

Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 24, 2016, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Naqvi has moved third reading of Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This is a vote deferral. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), they request that the vote on third reading of the bill be deferred until votes on Thursday after question period—tomorrow.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day. Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community Services has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1749.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation

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Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
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Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
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la justice**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch